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Asian stocks fall as oil hits $100/bbl

BUSINESS /B1
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Burma's proposed Charter bars Suu Kyi from poll run in 2010

NEWS / A3
Esperon makes the rounds of major service commands

Obama beats Clinton for 10th straight victory

After 'evil' tag comes 'she's the luckiest bitch'

By Michelle V. Ramos

WAITRESS GIL IL Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo is one lucky President, according to her economic adviser Alfrey Gior Jong Sal

PHILIPPINE DAILY
INQUIRER
BALANCED NEWS, FEARLESS VIEWS

Thursday, February 21, 2008 | 44 | 6 sections | Vol. 21 / No. 75 | P18

Senators bicker over witness

De Castro GMA's 2010 bet, says Lakas exec

By Michael Lim Ubac

VICE PRESIDENT NOLI DE CASTRO, standing by President Macapagal-Arroyo in the face of calls for her resignation and is likely to be rewarded for his loyalty by being appointed as the administration standard-bearer in the 2010 presidential election.

De Castro has stayed away from the controversies that have led to demands for Mrs Arroyo's ouster, saying he expected to be the beneficiary of an unexpected vacancy in the presidency.

Executive Director Ray Roquero of Lakas-Christian Muslim Democrats (Lakas-CMD) yesterday told the Inquirer that the stage was being set for De Castro to be endorsed by Mrs Arroyo as her presidential candidate in 2010.

"This will come about after the impending merger of Mr Arroyo's party, the Kabalikat ng Malayang Pilipino (Kampi) with Lakas-CMD. Interior Secretary Ronaldo Puno of Kampi and Executive Secretary Eduardo Ermita of Lakas-CMD are reportedly working on the unification.

Those mentioned by Ms Arroyo, De Castro would serve as the new face of the administration coalition, a broad political parties to be called "Lakas-Kampi," Roquero said.

RECOMMENDED, A4

Noli: Texts on 'girlfriend' demolition job

By Cynthia D. Balana and Tina G. Santos

VICE PRESIDENT NOLI DE CASTRO yesterday clarified as "malicious and baseless" text messages that said he had bought his girlfriend a house and lot worth P200 million and another mistress, a business tycoon.

"These are obviously a demolition job, a black propaganda against me by those who feel that I am a threat to them," a visibly irked De Castro said.

The text messages came amid growing talk that President Macapagal-Arroyo may step down because of allega-

COMMAND CONFERENCE Gen. Hermogenes Esperon has been observed doing the rounds of the major service commands. The AFP chief of staff (2nd) with Vice Admiral Rogelio Catanap, PDIC of the Navy on Wednesday. Esperon also visited the Philippine Army last week and is scheduled to go to the Philippine Air Force tomorrow. (Story on Page A3.)

Rallies to mark Edsa I 22nd anniversary

By Jaime Aning

PROTEST FROM THE LEFT, THE RIGHT and the middle looms in snowballing against the Arroyo administration as a result of the disclosures made in connection with the controversial National Broadband Network (NBN) project.

The militant Bayan Muna-led Makabayan Coalition yesterday said it would hold nationwide mass actions on Feb. 25, the 22nd anniversary of the 1986 Edsa "people power" revolt that toppled ferdinand Marcos' dictatorship.

The rallies, marches and other forms of protest actions being planned from August to January will serve as a buildup for the mass march rally scheduled on Feb. 25 at Rizal Park, according to Bayan secretary general Renato Reyes Jr.

Reyes said the Feb. 25 protest actions would be highlighted by the commemo-

MALACAÑANG, A4

TRUTH IS ALL THE RAGE At the UP Manila, students from different universities and other youth groups attend a Forum on Truth and Justice with Jose de Venecia as special guest. Rallies galore are scheduled across the country by militant groupings. (Story on Page A4.)

Now, Palace says ₱5M from 'private source'

By Michael Lim Ubac

THE P500,000 CASH GIVEN BY DEPUTY Executive Secretary Manuel Gaite to Rodolfo Lozada Jr. before the latter testified at the Senate on the scrapped broadband deal came from a "private source," Malacañang said yesterday.

Executive Secretary Eduardo Ermita made the statement a day after Gaite said the P500,000 came from his own pocket.

"Sir (Gaite) produced the amount, but it does not necessarily mean that it came from his pocket," Ermita said at his regular press conference.

Ermita said Gaite, the head of the Office of the Executive Secretary's legal depart ment, would be able to explain how he was able to spend the P500,000 that Ermita left to his subordinate the burden of lifting up the missing details.

Pressed to divulge the private donor in an ambush interview, Ermita said: "I am

MORE, PALACE, A4

JPE, Lacson warn peers on paid testimony

By Gil C. Cabacungan and Kristine L. Alave

SENATORS PANFILO Lacson and Juan Ponce Enrile yesterday cautioned their peers against inviting mercenary witnesses to the Senate's long-running probe of the scrapped broadband deal, which is scheduled to resume on Tuesday.

Sen. Alan Peter Cayetano, chair of the blue ribbon committee that is leading the investigation of the $329-million National Broadband Network (NBN) deal, said a Cabinet-level official would be a new resource person of the Senate.

But Cayetano said the new witness was neither the "archer" Jaime Medinas, a self-styled consultant to the broadband project, nor Rufus Rodriguez, an official of the National Economic

MALACAÑANG, A4

Lozada wife says threats continuing

By Lolit R. Saluevria

THE WIFE OF ROMULDO NOEL Lozada Jr. has told the Court of Appeals that death threats against her husband and the family were continuing and she feared they would become "strong dudes."

Violeta Lozada submitted a sworn statement to the appellate court on Tuesday to support a plea for the issuance of a writ of amparo—a measure adopted last year amid a surge in disappearances and extrajudicial executions.

"We do not know when this

LOZADA PAPER, A5

SHELTER FOR DISPLACED Residents in Maday, Eastern Samar, find shelter in makeshift huts. Almost 1,481,445 persons have been displaced by the heavy rains and consequent flooding, according to the Protective Disaster Coordinating Council. The death toll has risen to 13. (Above) Homes submerged in post-rains Maday municipality. (Story on Page A2.)

Galing Pook Awards: LGU projects for common good

By Veh Contreras

PUTTING FUNDS TOGETHER, FIVE neighboring municipalities in South Cotabato bought their own heavy equipment and built improved yet functional farm-to-market roads at about P30,000 per kilometer—less as much as P1 million if the project were handled by the government and private contractors.

In Marikina city pupils are getting free school supplies in exchange for recyclable materials they bring to campus. In San Carlos City in Negros Occidental, officials made the politically unpopular decision of adding a 3% canteen levy per table meter to water bills so they could raise funds to protect the local watershed.

The Isabela provincial government, in partnership with the National Food Authority, buys rice and corn from farmers at P1 and P1.5 higher than the rates offered by big traders and middlemen. Six out of 10 complaints or disputes among Cebu City residents have been resolved at the barangays without having to go to the courts.

These were among the 14 local gov-

MORE, PAGE A2

WEATHER FORECAST

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E. Samar flooding ebbs

Destruction heavy in all but 3 towns of province, says governor

BORONGAN, Eastern Samar—The floodwaters have ebbed and the north road has become accessible to trucks but the destruction wrought by the heavy rains in Eastern Samar province are just beginning to be seen.

The Provincial Disaster Coordinating Council has listed 29,983 households, or 146,695 persons, affected by the floods. Damaged houses numbered 2,686. The death toll has risen to 13 while three remain missing.

Gov. Ben Evardone said that out of the province's 23 municipalities, only three experienced minimal damage.

He said the province would need millions of pesos to rehabilitate the affected areas, especially the far-flung barangays.

"However, our priority now is to urgently deliver relief goods to displaced families," he said.

Many families have taken shelter in makeshift huts and others evacuated to gymnasiums while their houses remain submerged in floodwaters.

At least seven barangays in the municipalities of Oras and Hinabangan still submerged in water.

Deadline reader requested the National Disaster Coordinating Council to send a C130 cargo plane to deliver relief goods.

He asked the Air Force helicopters to deliver relief goods to the flooded and isolated barangays.

Pedro Geron, the district engineer of the Department of Public Works and Highways, said workers have been working round the clock to build a temporary bridge in Maculdon town.

Geron said a temporary footbridge has been completed for pedestrian traffic.

The office of Eastern Samar Rep. Teodolo Gogolla said it has been donating relief goods for the flood victims.

In Leyte, the town of Calubian was the hardest hit by the flooding.

Damage to agriculture and infrastructure reached P66 million, said Mayor Anie Apostol, the daughter of Leyte governor, the chief presidential legal counsel.

"Our agriculture is down by at least 15 percent as our rice fields are under water. Our barangay, municipal and provincial road networks suffered damage," Apostol said.

Evardone, with governor-visiting more than three meters, affected 258 families, or 1,018 individuals, in four of the town's 40 barangays, she said. Cynnie Cabarroo and Joey Galvante, Inquirer Visayas

BRIDGE TO NOWHERE. This bridge no longer connects two barangays in Dorogo, Albay. It was destroyed by flooding due to strong currents.

Bicol faces threat of mudslides

By Jocelyn R. Uy and Marlon Ramos

THE HEAVY RAINS THAT HAVE been battering the Eastern Visayas will subside in the next few days but the likely region faces the threat of mudslides and flash floods as the tailend of a cold front moves further up Luzon, weather forecasters warned yesterday.

The bad weather that caused the floods in some parts of Eastern Visayas, particularly on Samar island, was triggered by a low pressure area spotted off the east coast of northern Mindanao combining with the cold front affecting the Visayas, according to the Philippine Atmospheric, Geophysical and Astronomical Services Administration (Pagasa).

The presence of a low pressure area so close to the approaching summer season was unusual for the La Niña weather phenomenon, which will continue to influence weather patterns in the country until June, explained Nathaniel Cruz, the Pagasa weather branch chief.

La Niña

Cruz said that although the rains and flooding in the provinces of Leyte and Samar may taper off, the tail-end of the cold front and the effects of La Niña will bring heavy rains in the Bicol, Eastern Visayas and Northern Mindanao regions until Monday.

Heavy rains may also hit some parts of Southern Luzon and the Mimaropa region.

Local government units, local disaster coordinating councils and the Office of Civil Defense have been asked to warn residents living in coastal communities, along mountain slopes, riverbanks and low-lying areas about the possibility of flashfloods and landslides.

Asked if residents in the mountainous should be evacuated, he said: "It's up to the local officials. Our job is just to give information and warnings. The decision about evacuation is the call of the local executives."

"What we are experiencing are the weak southwest flow and tropical easterly system. But this is further enhanced by La Niña. This [condition] may last until the second quarter of the year although I cannot say if this is the worst scenario," said Pagasa Director Nathaniel Cruz.

La Niña (Spanish for "little girl") is defined as cooler than normal sea-surface temperatures in the central and eastern tropical Pacific Ocean that impact global weather patterns. It is the diametrical opposite of El Niño, which is characterized by warm surface temperatures. El Niño would cause a dry period in the Philippines, while La Niña would typically cause a wet period.

The Office of the Civil Defense has monitored eight deaths in Eastern Samar and Leyte. It also reported yesterday that 15,376 families were affected in Eastern Samar and 23,962 in Northern Samar and Leyte.

Cold front

In the weather outlook that the Pagasa presented yesterday, rainfall forecast over the Eastern Visayas area for the next few days...or until Feb. 24—will be light to moderate.

"Under the low pressure area has [vanished] and the tail-end of a cold front [has moved] up to Luzon, Eastern Visayas can expect only light to moderate rains," though residents in the region are still cautioned to be vigilant for possible landslides and flooding, said Cruz.

The third region, particularly Samar, Catanduanes and Camarines Norte...will experience heavy rains that could trigger mudslides and flooding.

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Senators pooh-pooh Palace 'Unity Walk'

By Dona Pazcoguin and TJ Burgonio

OPPOSITION SENATORS YESTERday dismissed as a gimmick the Cabinet's show of unity in support of President Macapagal-Arroyo, who is under fire yet again because of allegations of corruption in the aborted deal with China's ZTE Corp. for the National Broadband Network project.

The senators said they were reminded of the "unity walk" that convicted plunderer ex-President Joseph Estrada did with his Cabinet in Malacañang in the days leading up to his ouster in 2001 because of corruption allegations.

Without mentioning Estrada, Sen. Ma Presidente Manuel Villar said the unity walk has been done to the past but it would not ensure that all Cabinet members would stick with the President to the end.

"Let's face it, we have seen these before, we have seen them joining hands, that sort of thing. But in the end, one or two will break away," he said in Filipino.

Estrada's son, Sen. Jinggoy Estrada, said his father's unity walk with his Cabinet was more reminiscent of the one that he [the father] did, noting that the President was facing a crisis now in the same way that his father was facing a crisis at the time.

As to whether it would end in the same way, then ex, Mr. Arroyo's ouster, he would not comment.

Estrada dismissed the public display of solidarity, saying that the Arroyo Cabinet was not that united behind the President.

He said he was confident there might be some Cabinet members willing to spill the beans on the allegedly anomalous NBN-ZTE deal and testify before the Senate.

But when asked if he personally knew about such Cabinet members, Estrada said he was basing his claim on "unconfirmed" reports reaching him.

State of panic

For Sen. Panfilo Lacson, the unity walk showed that the President was in a state of "panic."

He recalled that the unity walk that Mr. Arroyo did with her Cabinet in 2005, at the height of the "Hello Garci" wiretapping scandal where she was accused of rigging the 2004 elections.

A unity walk when the President is confronted with a political crisis is a sign of panic, said Lacson, who was Estrada's police chief and who led the campaign to oust him at the height of the second Edsa people power uprising that brought down Estrada.

"I want to mention one name and one song. Jimky Salleman. If we hold on together," she led that song. The next day, the turncoat against Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo," said Theodore Te.

Pat Dans who grew up dozing near dad Jose, "It's so Hmmm," he said.

Villar shuns JDV's 'revolution'

SENATE PRESIDENT MANUEL VILlar (yesterday declined to be part of the Council for Moral Revolution but lauded the initiative of Rep. Jose de Venecia Jr. to fight graft and corruption in government.

"While I support the moral revolution movement which is in line with my advocacy to weed out rampant corruption, I cannot take on an active role in the council in deference to the ongoing Senate investigations," said Villar in a statement.

By declining to take an active role in the council or a ceremonial position, Villar cited his position as Senate president and the need to remain objective and chair issues in the face of ongoing Senate investigations.

Reginald Cruz, Chief Olympic Potential Leader declined to sit as chair of De Venecia's moral revolution council.

"As Senate President, I am called upon to exercise utmost caution so as not to become any semblance of politics or more grandstanding in the Senate's search for undertakings at true, honest and sincere," he said.

The Senate is not only investigating the National Broadband Network deal where De Venecia's son, Joey, is the primary witness but is also poised to investigate De Venecia's role in the controversial North Luzon Railways (Northrail) project.

"Carrying out our check-and-balance function through our investigations is in fact the Senate's concrete share in working to effect changes in government," Villar emphasized.

Villar attended a dinner and got together with De Venecia and wife, Gina at the Forbes Park residence of the former Speaker last Feb. 17 when the moral revolution movement was also launched. Also present were political and religious leaders.

A source said Villar and his wife, Rep. Cynthia Villar were surprised that the birthday dinner at the De Venecia mansion was turned into a media event which came out as a show of force by the recently ousted Speaker. —with C. Cabacungan Jr.

Senate, House deadlocked over cheap meds bill

By Dona Pazo Hogan

THE SENATE AND THE HOUSE of Representatives are deadlocked over the "generics-only" provision that congressmen have included in their version of the landmark cheaper medicines bill.

Under this provision, doctors are required to prescribe only the generic names of drugs in order to stop the practice imposed by the Generics Act, where doctors are required to write down both the generic and the brand name of drugs in their prescriptions.

Other than the generics only provision, lawmakers agreed on all other provisions of the bill during the first meeting of the bicameral conference committee Tuesday night in Makati.

The deadlock, however, raises doubts that Congress would be able to pass the much-awaited bill before it adjourns on March 29.

The bill aims to bring down the price of medicines by promoting more competition through the importation of cheaper but quality medicines from abroad.

It aims to amend the Intellectual Property Code and runs the drug procurement system to promote the local generic drugs manufacturing industry. It also aims to strengthen the powers of the Bureau of Food and Drugs to go after substandard medicines.

CAPTIONS

'Sunrise provision'

Sen. Pilar Juliana "Pia" Cayetano, a co-sponsor of the bill, said that before they adjourned the bicameral meeting, the Senate panel's conciliatorist position was to require doctors to write down first brand names instead of one.

The House panel's compromise position, on the other hand, was to provide for a three-year "sunrise provision" so that the generics only

provision would take effect after three years.

But Cayetano said she was not convinced that the local generic drugs industry would be strong enough in three years' time.

She said she believed that shifting the choice of medicine from the doctor to the drugstore would give undue advantage to multinational companies who can afford to undertake "under the table" marketing tactics so that the drugstore would offer their brand.

She said she preferred that the issue of generic drugs be the subject of another law.

"We want this studied more deeply in our committee hearings so that we do not create another problem," she said.

The lawmakers did manage to resolve another conflicting provision on drug price regulation.

Sen. Ahmad Nosar D. pointed out absence of the Senate version of the bill, said they reached a consensus to give the authority to regulate drug prices to the secretary of the Department of Health.

The Senate version originally gave this power to the President.

The House version, on the other hand, proposed a tripartisan price regulatory body.

"We acknowledge that there should be regulation in instances when the market system does not work. The Secretary of Health would have the authority to regulate (prices) especially when there is a big gap. I believe the prices of medicines sold here and those sold abroad," Nosar said.

Joey de V makes it to YouTube

WILLO, MSO

Sen. "Joey" de Venecia yesterday accused ex-Gonzales Chair Benjamin Abalos of being behind the planting on the global video-sharing site YouTube of an allegedly wiretapped conversation between businessman Jose "Joey" de Venecia III and Abalos.

Abalos denied the allegation, saying taxidermy is the controversial National Broadband Network (NBN) deal.

De Venecia, speaking at the University of the Philippines-Manila yesterday, did not deny that it was his voice on the online audio amount talking about a $130 million kickback allegedly demanded by Abalos.

But he said he planned to sue Abalos for wiretapping.

Speaking to reporters in Pasig, former Speaker Jose de Venecia said he had no other suspect but Abalos, who reportedly boasted to the businessman earlier that he (Abalos) had a compact disc of his wiretapped calls.

The young de Venecia earlier accused Abalos of demanding a $130-million kickback from the NBN deal.

"I guess the one who wiretapped me is the one circulating it on the Internet. That's the Chairman Abalos. He's the only guy who told me that my phone was wiretapped," Joey said.

"He (Abalos) probably uploaded it on YouTube," he added.

Though he had yet to reveal who he was talking to, De Venecia said it could be someone from "Honey Star), before blackmagic girl and Sticky Bacon to [illegible]."

"Basically those are the guys I talked to," he said.

The clips released on YouTube reportedly had De Venecia complaining about Abalos' $130 million kickback from the deal with ZTE Corp.

"Of course, I was complaining. When Abalos wanted me to do was so buy equipment from ZTE but part of the equipment would be white zero call will missing meaning there's no equipment but it looks like there was a sale of equipment, it would be a ghost sale, therefore the P130 million will go to the position," he said.

Alliance W. Lopez

'Enlightenment not loyalty check'

By Nikko Dizon

ARMED FORCES CHIEF GEN. Hermogenes Esperon Jr. said the commander visits that he has made to the Philippine Navy and the Philippine Air Force were not as much a loyalty check as to conduct a "discussion for enlightenment" on the ongoing controversy over the allegedly anomalous NBN-ZTE deal that has sparked renewed calls for the resignation of President Macapagal-Arroyo.

"It is always good to be enlightened," Esperon said.

"We need to be clarified as part of the body politic. We cannot move just because that is what is expected," Esperon said in a message of English and Filipino at a press conference at the Philippine Navy yesterday.

Esperon, one of the President's most loyal generals, stressed that the military should not intervene in political affairs.

"What do you prefer, an AFP that intervenes every now and then or an AFP that would simply be constitutional, very professional, focused on its job?" he said to questions about the military's role in resolving the political crisis.

"What we are telling you is, we are the second one. We shall remain committed to the upholding of the Constitution, the protection of the democratic process and we will adhere and obey the chain of command," said Esperon who is scheduled to meet with his Navy officials at the Villamor Air Base today.

He explained that his meetings with the service commands are focused on operational matters and their strategic plans in the campaign against the Communist Party of the Philippines and its armed wing, the New People's Army.

Esperon said his visits merely coincided with the mass protests against his dismissal.

They had been scheduled shortly after the President extended his term as military chief until May 9, he said.

Esperon said the AFP will join the country in commemorating the 22nd anniversary of the Edsa People Power 1, where the military played a major role in ousting the dictator Ferdinand Marcos and restored democracy to the Philippines.

Esperon said while he cannot really explain it, he feels "there are a lot of differences between 1986 and 2008."

Esperon also said that it would be "easy" for the military to order power but it would be "difficult" to run a government.

He added that the military leadership has not yet dismissed the call of Iloilo Archbishop Angel Lagdameo, president of the 120-bishop Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines (CBCP) for the people to wage a "new brand of people power" to oust corruption in government.

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The Philippine Council of Management

MICHAEL "Mikee" L. ROMERO, Ph.D., Management Man of the Year

The setting of national records comes like a pre-ordained mission for businessman, sportsman, educator, and art patron Dr. Michael "Mikee" Romero, 56.

Romero, as chief executive officer, has propelled the US$150 million Harbour Centre Port Terminal Inc., the country's biggest and most efficient non-containerized port terminal, to achieve record growth levels with its parent company the Harbour Centre Port Holdings Inc. Harbour Centre handled a year's volume of 9 million metric tons in various cargoes and serviced over 1,000 international vessels a year.

Outside of port operations, Mikee is chairman and president of various corporations such as the Philippine Stock Exchange-listed (3H) 100 stockbrokering corporation Pacific Ocean, investment corporation Mikee Tesh Capital Inc., and 168 Forum Pacific Mining Corp., a nickel mine based in Mindanao.

Romero, vice chairman of the Philippine Basketball League (PBL) is the acknowledged "Godfather of Philippine Amateur Basketball". In December last year, under his stewardship as manager, the Philippine basketball team bagged the gold medal in the Southeast Asian Games (SEAG) in Thailand. This took place only a few months after the Philippines, through his initiative, returned to the hardcourt and won the gold at the Southeast Asian Basketball Association (SEABA) championship in Indonesia. This achievement in April 2007 brought the Philippines back to international competition after the Federation Internationale Basketball Association (FIBA World) suspended the country from international competitions in 2005.

As if these achievements weren't enough to cap a sterling year, on Dec. 30, 2007, his Harbour Centre team, dubbed as "Batang Pier", engraved in Philippine basketball sports history the first four-peat or four-straight championship in the Philippine Basketball League. The record spelled over to previously established three-peat wins of champions with the Philippine Basketball Association.

As this year's recipient of the "Management Man of the Year" award to be conferred by The Philippine Council of Management (PHILCUMAN) on the occasion of The 36th National Management Congress today, the youthful Romero stands out as a "work in progress", at a new nexus of success, in today's technology-driven business world where achievement is not only measured in revenues but also in the ability to establish an essential link with the arts, culture and education.

Dr. Romero obtained his Doctorate of Philosophy (Ph.D.) in Management with a Thesis Gold Medal and an Academic High Distinction at the International Academy of Management and Economics-Philippines (IAME). He completed the academics for the Doctorate in Business Administration at the De La Salle University's Professional Schools after his Masters in Business Management at the Asian Institute of Management (AIM), and teaching stints with the Ateneo de Manila and De La Salle universities.

A rounded out perspective for business and economics emerged from his involvements in frontline industries not only in port operations but also in logistics, the range of low cost, socialized housing and AAA construction, environmental management, media and newspaper publishing, financing, investments and e-commerce as well as others. Dr. Romero was based in Singapore and Australia from 2000 to 2002 during which time he was involved in e-commerce, e-logistics and venture capital financing.

Dr. Romero's higher learning and global exposure in finance, as well as inherent regard for the uplift of social conditions in the country enabled to conceptualize and implement the country's first Asset Backed Securitization via the US$100 million Smokey Mountain Project Participation Certificate. The inter-sectoral project, spearheaded by R-II Builders Inc. for the private sector, was carried out with Dr. Romero's role with R-II Builders as executive vice president and chief operating officer. The rise of the 79-hectare Manila Harbour Centre, a port city from reclaimed land, resulted to the allevaition and housing provided for some 30,000 below-poverty Filipinos, who lived on top and around the world-famous Smokey Mountain dumpsite.

From an Dr. Romero native to arts and culture both for relaxation and for worthwhile expression, the propensity to excel follows.

In late 2006, Dr. Romero put the Philippines in the map of Japan's traditional and highly exclusive art-business of koi fish breeding and competition by winning the much-coveted Kokugyo award or the Japanese National Fish Award in the 37th All Japan World Koi Show in Tokyo.

The Kokugyo award in Dr. Romero's life points to clear case of attaching excellence. It illustrates that even as chances for success in certain tasks stretch out to one-in-a million, Dr. Romero's single-minded focus and passion to learn endeavors by heart amazingly converts the success ratio to eventually spell out resounding victory.

Special thanks to the following:

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The Philippine Council of Management Officers

After 'evil' tag comes 'she's the luckiest bitch'

From page A1

ocrats said that despite the slew of criticisms leveled at Ms Arroyo, the numbers proved that her administration was working hard to improve the economy to uplift the lives of many Filipinos.

"She may be a bitch, but she's the luckiest bitch around," Solarista said at a socioeconomic forum held yesterday at the Ateneo de Manila University campus in Pasiwell, Mckay City Drive in Business, Page A12.

His remark elicited laughter from the audience, but he subsequently apologized for it, saying it could have been taken seriously by some people in the audience that included members of the media.

Wide affection

In a text message to the Inquirer, the governor said: "It (The remark) was said tongue in cheek, almost with affection.

SALCEDA (JOKO) GOES

during an Ateneo forum when I was discussing poverty and positive global trends and domestic factors.

"I admit it was a bad joke in poor taste. I apologize to PGMA (the President) for the unintended misimpression. Carl Halili can corroborate that."

Halili, the economic planning secretary during the Ramos administration, was another speaker at the forum.

'Evil'

But the "bitch" remark overshadowed Secretary Ronaldo Lozada Jr.'s ceremony in the Senate on Monday that then businessmen Planning Secretary Ibrahim Seit had described Ms Arroyo to him as "evil."

That same afternoon, Seit, now adviser of the Commission on Higher Education, said he did not remember saying such a thing.

Nevertheless, the "evil" tag is now making the rounds of the highly charged political atmosphere.

Yesterday Justice Secretary Raul Gonzalez, an outspoken ally of the President, took a dig at groups critical of the administration.

Gonzalez referred to them as "evil—civil society," conveying himself in indirection.

When reporters later asked him about it, a smiling Gonzalez said it was "a slip of the tongue."

GDP growth

Salceda said the President's "luck" in successfully improving the Philippines' macroeconomic fundamentals was highlighted by the unredressed growth in the gross domestic product—the sum of the value of goods produced and services rendered within an economy in a given period—and the foreign inflows during her term.

He said that compared with the macroeconomic fundamentals during the terms of President Corazon Aquino, Fidel Ramos and Joseph Estrada, the figures were much better during Ms Arroyo's term.

He noted that GDP growth averaged at 4.7 percent from 2001 to 2007 under Ms Arroyo's leadership, and averaged at only 3.6 percent during Aquino's term, 3.7 percent during Ramos' term, and 2.6 percent during Estrada's term.

Last year's 7.3-percent GDP growth was the highest in 31 years.

Salceda also said that inflation, or the increase in consumer prices, was slowest during Ms Arroyo's term.

Inflation averaged at 10.4 percent during Aquino's term, 7.6 percent during Ramos' term, Agencies during Estrada's term, and 5.1 percent in 2001 to 2007 under Ms Arroyo's presidency.

Tax refund

Salceda said he had proposed to Ms Arroyo that the government refund 20 percent of the income taxes it withheld last year from salaried individuals.

The proposed refund, amounting to P16 billion, will mean an estimated P7,000 to cents cash for the 2.3 million employees that filed income tax returns last year.

According to Salceda, the President considers this proposal a standby program to be implemented in the event of a recession in the United States.

The Philippine economy shrinks by 0.17% percent; he expects 1 percent drop in the United States' GDP per Salceda's estimates.

The Philippines is expected to be adversely affected by a US economic because of its close economic relations with the world's biggest economy.

The United States accounts for 17 percent of the export earnings of the Philippines, and is home to many Filipino workers whose remittances are considered a major growth driver for the domestic economy. With a report from Leila Salaverria

Lozada wife says threats vs family continuing

From page A1

nightmare in our lives will end. We are afraid that as soon as the media road off, we will be strung slacks," she said.

"The lives of the family members have been disrupted and they are no longer free to leave their home and move about," she added.

According to Nebria, the threats against her husband and the family continued following his revelations to the Senate that implicated administration officials in the allegedly anomalous National Broadband Network (NBN) project.

"We are informed of threats passed through our friends that some people are planning to try to inflict some family members, and if they refuse to comply, they will be hurt," she said.

Nebria said the threats came from individuals who got hurt as a result of her husband's testimony. She said that security concerns would continue especially when her husband is no longer in the public eye.

Supporting the protection appeal for Lozada and his family is his sister Corinta, who said in her affidavit that she still feared for her brother's safety even though he had been taken into the Senate's custody.

Stop authorities

"I am afraid that those who have been exposed will wreak vengeance against Jun and I know they have the capability to do so," Corinta said.

Lozada, who has joined his brother's amparo petition on his behalf, requested the court to stop the police, military, their detail Security Group, the United Nations of Investigation and the Aviation Security Group from apprehending him, his immediate family and his siblings.

In his motion, Lozada also asked the court to order the production of the Ninoy Aquino International Airport Terminal 1 logbooks, closed-circuit camera videos at the airport taken upon his arrival, and his passport which, he said, had not been returned by the people who took him from Nria.

Return documents

The SC should be directed to present the documents it took from his former office, the Philippine Postal Corp., and the Bureau's reports related to the incident, he said.

Lozada sought reports from the Philippine National Police, the Office of the President, the Presidential Security Group and National Executive Secretary Manuel Gaite that are related to his alleged Feb. 5 kidnapping.

The appellate court is hearing the amparo petition today and Vicdoz and Carmen are expected to take the witness stand.

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ISUZU

Palace: Another people power uprising unlikely

By Christine O. Avendaño, Lila Salaverría and Norman Bordadora

MALACAÑANG IS CONVINCED that the current political turmoil is not enough to trigger another people power uprising in the country.

"We believe that the conditions and the reasons are not present," Executive Secretary Eduardo Ermita said at a news conference yesterday.

Ermita said that the call by Archbishop Angel Lagdameo, president of the Catholic Bishops Conference of the Philippines, for a new brand of people power to oppose and end corruption did not represent the position of the entire Church leadership.

Voice of experience

"I am not belittling the archbishop's capability but what I'm saying that this is his own and I don't believe that it is enough really to get the [anti-Gloria] people who believe in him would want to happen," he said.

Ermita pointed out a recent newspaper item that quoted former President Fidel Ramos as saying that "the elements for a successful people power are not just present."

"And he's talking from experience," Ermita said. Ermita noted that Ramos was one of the main source of the first People Power uprising in 1986.

Same faces

Anti-Arroyo groups are planning rallies to mark the Edsa I anniversary on Monday and to protest Malacañang's alleged involvement in the controversial national broadband network (NBN) project. (Story on Page A2.)

Justice Secretary Raul Gonzalez also said he did not think there could be a new people power revolution if the same old faces involved in the previous mass uprisings keep swapping up.

"How can it be heard now if the same faces are doing it?" said Gonzalez.

Gonzalez also referred to recent story of retiable Bishop Rodolfo Noel Lazada Jr. during Monday's Senate hearing on the broadband scandal that Neptali Sere, chair of the Commission on Higher Education, had called his house "evil."

Gonzalez said he did not like Sere's reaction to Lazada's disclosure: That Sere could not remember what he wrote.

GMA satisfied

"I was not happy with the answer of Sere because that opens up the door to many interpretations. Mawawalang-malay ba ho will remember later. That is a question that is unbelievable by yes or no," he said.

He said that he had told Sere of his displeasure but Sere did not respond to him.

Gonzalez also noted that the President was apparently satisfied with Sere's explanation and even asked Sere to stay beside her during the Cabinet's "solidarity walk" on Tuesday.

In the House of Representatives, Ms Arroyo's allies adopted the same line as Malacañang that they could not care less about the allegations of corruption and bribery because they were looking after the well-being of their constituents.

UP Law professors, students call on GMA to quit

By TJ Burgonio

SHUNNED BY WHAT THEY viewed as President Macapagal-Arroyo's inaction on the disclosures about the strapped National Broadband Network (NBN) project, students and professors of the University of the Philippines College of Law yesterday called on her to go or, however tough her post.

"The President's own silence on this matter is totally unacceptable. The exposés have directly implicated her," UP College of Law Dean Salvador Carlos said at a briefing, reading from a prepared statement titled 'A Call for Truth and Accountability.'

The College of Law chastised Ms Arroyo, as well as Commissioner Mercedes Gotanco, et-chaired public trust by their silence and inaction on the claims of corruption that attended the approval of the $329 million NBN deal.

"Public office is a public trust. This is the core principle of our republican and democratic vision," the college said in the statement prepared by the UP Law community.

It said that with the revelations of Jose de Venecia III, Commission on Higher Education Chair Romulo Neri and Senate witness Rodolfo Lozada Jr., the "silence and inaction of the President and the Ombudsman directly violate the core principle."

"Instead of adopting a policy of full disclosure, [Ms Arroyo] has allowed [Neri] to keep a selective silence—when seen against by the Senate but not by Malacañang," it said.

At the very least

The UP College of Law said all the officials "implicated by key witnesses" in the deal and in the "kidnapping" of Lozada on Feb. 5 should at the very least take a leave of absence, but also consider resignation.

It added: "For the President and the Ombudsman, while we have asked for the minimum, for them to take a leave of absence, we say also: Resignation is always an option."

Carlos later clarified that the President or the Ombudsman should take a leave pending the completion of the Senate inquiry into the NBN deal.

"The minimum that we want her to do is to take a leave while the investigation is ongoing, to erase any doubt that the investigatory process will be tainted," Carlos said in his interview.

Theodore Te, director of the college's Office of Legal Aid, cited, saying: "That's the minimum. The other option is resignation."

De Castro GMA's presidential bet, says Lakas exec

From page A1

"The President has given her consent and approval to the merger," Roquero said. Ermita would mind the planned merger last week.

'Overwhelming sentiment'

Roquero reported "an overwhelming sentiment among members of Lakas to support the Vice President's bid for the presidency for continuity of programs."

"He can build on the legacy of the President which is marked by a record high economic growth in 20 years, infrastructure projects in the countryside, especially to Mindanao, and successful efforts at fighting hunger," Roquero said.

De Castro, 58, a popular radio and television news presenter and commentator, led presidential aspirants in the latest popularity survey conducted by the Social Weather Stations.

The idea of tandeming De Castro as Ms Arroyo's successor was broached during a meeting in Malacañang attended by 31 execs, former Political Affairs Advisers' council chairpersons and first Juan Miguel Zubiri, the Lakas secretary general.

"Lakas will support Noli for President in 2010," Roquero said in a text message after the meeting.

Consensus building

Roquero contended Ms Arroyo's chief of Lakas-CMD who also is a founder of Kampi, had not made a decision on the issue.

"We, she has yet to make up her mind. We will respect the position of our party chairman, but I believe she will also consult the members of the national executive and party members for consensus building," he said.

Political meetings in Malacañang have become frequent since the controversy over the aborted National Broadband Network (NBN) project with Chinese's ZTE Corp. intensified with the revelations of project consultant Rodolfo Noel Lozada Jr.

Colossus

"We will be a colossus—the largest and the biggest party ever. It's like a massive quake that will be felt to the farthest town, islands in the country," said Roquero.

He denied that the move to anoint De Castro was triggered by the political crisis spawned by corruption allegations that go all the way up to Malacañang.

"No, this is to solidify the vision of the administration party into one homogeneous political party," he said.

Asked as a news conference if the reported anointment of Secretary Ermita (MMDA) project towards Chiz-Noli tandem would affect the overlaunch of project consultant Rodolfo Noel Lozada Jr.

"Not at all. It is a natural development in the party-

Italian priest is back, but not in old parish

OSIGWAMGA, CITY—FELIM MISSIONARY Fr Giovanni Rossi, who was kidnapped by bandits rebels last year, has returned to the Philippines but is not yet going back to his former parish in Pegou, Zamboanga Sibugay.

Fr. Giuseppi Sarubbi, regional superior of the Pontifical Institute for Foreign Missions (PIME), said it was their "collective decision" that Rossi should arrive in Manila for at least a year before returning to Pegou.

Rossi spent 39 harrowing days in the hands of suspected Islamic extremist rebels last year. He returned to his hometown in Italy after his release on July 19 for a six-month vacation but pledged to return and continue his missionary work.

"Classic One will remain in Metro Manila for a year," Sarubbi said, referring to the tall and well-built Rossi.

The decision to hold Rossi's return to Pegou disappointed his parishioners.

'Big Foot'

Francisco Balayan, a lay leader of St. Paul's Parish, where Rossi served, said residents have been busy preparing for the homecoming of "Fr Clare" or "Big Foot," as he is fondly called.

Many expected him back in time for the priest's fiesta of San Pablo on Jan. 23, and every prepared Italian dishes to welcome him home, Balayan said.

"It was those who missed for the evasion of the fiesta of San Pablo (St. Paul) in our town," he said.

Balayan said Rossi is well loved in his parish.

He was loved more for his simplicity. "He celebrated mass in slippers," Balayan said.

Sarubbi said the decision for Rossi to return to Manila was reached during the PIME convention in Pattaya early this month.

The regional superior said Rossi really wanted to return to Pegou but the decision had already been made. But Rossi, he added, would be allowed to visit his old mission in Pegou as part of his "re-familiarization."

Italian Ambassador Roberto Aniss Pedoto said the Italian government is always worried about the security of their missionaries in the Philippines.

"So far as we are concerned, his return is his own choice and the choice of his superiors. Now, the government cannot say no or no. It's up to them to decide," Pedoto said.

He said that when the Italian government could do is to coordinate with Philippine authorities to ensure the safety of Rossi and other missionaries working in remote areas of the country. Julie S. Alipala, inquirer Mindanao

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22ND ANNIVERSARY, FEBRUARY 22-25, 2008

KAYAPAAN AT PAGKAKAISA TUNGO SA KAUNLARAN!

PROGRAM OF ACTIVITIES

FEBRUARY 21
8:00 PM — **EQUILIBRIUM**
Channel 4, Host: Fmr. Sec. Heherson Alvarez

FEBRUARY 22, 2008/ FRIDAY
MILITARY DAY
WREATH-LAYING CEREMONY
Libingan ng mga Bayani

H.E. PRESIDENT GLORIA MACAPAGAL-ARROYO
Guest of Honor

H.E. FMR. PRESIDENT FIDEL V. RAMOS
Special Guest

7:30 A.M. — Arrival: **H.E President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo**
Full Military Honors
National Anthem
Wreath-laying: **H.E President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo**
Dropping of Flower Petals

Introduction of the Guest of Honor
EPPC Chair, Exec. Sec. Eduardo R. Ermita

Inspirational Message: **H.E. Fmr. President Fidel V. Ramos**

8:30 A.M. — **MEDIA FORUM BREAKFAST** (By Special Invitation)
Special Guests: EDSA Personalities

AFFIXION MEDICO – DENTAL MISSION (Commence of Fort Bonifacio)

FEBRUARY 23, 2008/SATURDAY
YOUTH DAY

TELECASTS OF EDSA 1 DOCUMENTARY (This will be on February 22P lobby to enable schools to view and discuss it.)

9:05 AM — ABSCBN2, GMA7, QTV11, IBC13
11:30 AM — NBN4
1:00 PM — IBC13, NBN4
3:00 PM — ABSCBN2, QTV11
4:00 PM — RPN9, NBN4

Knowledge Channel and Local Community Channels for all time slots

TELECASTS AT DEFFERENT TIMES ALSO THROUGHOUT FEB. 22-25

9:00 AM — **MURAL & POSTER PAINTING**, Fort Bonifacio

9:00 AM — **NCR STUDENT ORATORICAL CONTEST** (Pamantasan ng Lungsod ng Maynila Auditorium)

9:30 AM — **GAT/LRDC OPEN HOUSE, FILM SHOWINGS** (Barangay ng mga Bayani, Quezon Blvd., QC)

3:00 PM — **EJ** (a musical about Edgar Jopson & Evelio Javier at CCP Little Theater)

ESSAY WRITING, POETRY CONTESTS, Feb. 20-25 (Schools Nationwide)

5:00 PM — **FILMS ON EDSA** (Rizal Park)

7:00 PM — **STUDENT TV DEBATE**, Channel 4

EDSA 1, THEN AND TODAY –CAMARILLO PHOTO EXHIBIT
(Martinez Riverbanks, Mati – Feb. 23 – March 8)

FEBRUARY 24, 2008/SUNDAY
PEL-GIKAN DAY
FEAST OF OUR LADY OF QUEEN OF PEACE
Edsa Shrine

9:30 PM — **EUCHARISTIC CELEBRATION**
PROCESSION
BARRIO FIESTA w/ EDSA Community

9:00 PM — **RADIO BALINTATAW TALAKAYAN** on EDSA 1, DZRH

FEBRUARY 25, 2008/MONDAY
PEOPLE'S DAY
FLAG RAISING CEREMONY
People Power Monument

Masters of Ceremonies: **Fmr. Cong. Agapito "Butz" Aquino and Ms. Mitzi Austriaveras**

7:30 AM — Arrival: **H.E. Vice President Noli de Castro**
Arrival Honors
FLAG RAISING: H.E. Vice President Noli de Castro
Assisted by: H.E. Fmr. President Fidel V. Ramos
END Sec. Gilberto Teodoro
EPPC Chair, Exec. Sec. Eduardo R. Ermita

National Anthem
Philharmonia sa Rizaland
Business: Mr. Ramon Lopez, Exec. Dir. Philippine Center for Entrepreneurship
Religious: Sr. Luz Emmanuelle Soriano, RA
Military: Gen. Antonio Santos
Youth: Winner of the Oratorical Contest
"KKK's": Mr. Eddie Rocas, Chairman, Chino Roces Foundation, Inc.
Municipal Colors by Metro Manila Mayors together with MMDA & EPPC Flags

ECUMENICAL PRAYER

RELEASE OF GIANT FLAG OF BALLOONS
H.E. Vice President Noli de Castro
H.E. Fmr. Pres. Fidel V. Ramos
Fmr. Cong. Agapito "Butz" Aquino
Rev. James Reuter, SJ
EPPC Chair, Exec. Sec. Eduardo R. Ermita

INSPIRATIONAL SONG: IMPOSSIBLE DREAM

PRESENTATION OF SPECIAL AWARDEES:
Spirit of Edsa Foundation: Dylan Wilk, Gamad Kalinga volunteer
Evelio Javier Foundation: Lito Ibañez Mayor Hon. Cesar Flores
EGEF/EPPC: Nuke Nonviolent Carrier Enyonghong Israel/Kalamoo
Wood Everest Women: Climbers
EGEF/KKK/EPPC: Arlyn de Ramel Foundation
Co Negosyo

RESPONSE FOR AWARDEES:
Mr. Jose A. Concepcion III
Co Negosyo
FINALE SONGS: BAYAN KUMAGKAKAWA
KAPIT BISIG/SHOWER OF CONFETTI

(FLAG RAISING & ECUMENICAL PRAYER simultaneous in Philippine Embassies, cities nationwide, particularly Baguio, Cebu, Davao, Iloilo, c/o DFA, DILG, EPPC.)

10:00 AM - 5:00 PM — **JOB FAIR AT PCEA**

3:00 PM — **EUCHARISTIC CELEBRATION for Peace** (Santo Domingo Church, Quezon Avenue, QC)

NATIONWIDE SPORTS ACTIVITIES (Baguio, Cebu, Davao)

Senators bickering over witness

From page A1

ic and Development Authority.

Reyes is a friend of both Rodolfo Noel Lozada Jr. and Commission on Higher Education Chair Romulo Neri, according to Cayetano.

Cayetano is bothered that Cayetano would announce the appearance of a new witness.

"Even if you don't mention his name, you gave some hints here and there. People [with Malacañang] are really smiling, especially when this person is. They can easily preempt him from testifying," Lacson said.

Something significant

But Cayetano maintained that the new witness had something significant to bring to the table.

"He is a government official but he is not Reyenso or Madrigal. His life is not in danger. He knows he is already being tailed. He wants to challenge the government about the truth in the investigation," the blue ribbon committee chair said.

Cayetano said Lacson should just have called him to ask who the new witness was. "I would have told him it was not anyone he was talking to," Cayetano said.

Asked whether the new witness was Finance Secretary Margarita Teves, Cayetano only replied with a smile.

"The new witness can atone those who owe it to himself," he said.

Teves was present at several meetings at the Shark Attack Grill and Country Club in Mandaluyong City where the major players extensively discussed the broadband deal.

Estella said that while he was open to issue witnesses, the Senate should be weary of those who put a price on their testimony.

Estella said he heard that Madrigal was the project director of the much-maligned Fertilizer Fund scandal when he was called in the Philippine Commercialization Clearinghouse Inc. scam in 2001 when he testified before Ramos and around 15,000 cops would be put on alert for the planned mass action on Feb. 25.

"We have contingency measures [like] Task Force Manila Shield, and we continue to monitor the situation. We continue to coordinate and interface with the organizers [of the rallies] and local chief executives," he said.

Reyes downplayed the potential turnout of the planned mass actions, saying the people were "tired of rallies and demonstrations."

"They are looking at how they can capitalize on the country's economic gains, as they can work and contribute their businesses," he said.

Alexis Pupos

Police monitoring street protest lingo

THE PHILIPPINE NATIONAL Police is monitoring statements made in street protests to see if these would merit charges for crimes that may include the Anti-Terror Law.

But the PNP spokesperson, Senior Supt. Nestor Barbosa, said police had yet to issue a statement that would qualify as sedition.

PNP Director General Avelino Razon said police intelligence units were already monitoring the statements made in the protests.

"We have intelligence units monitoring the statements made in the protests. We are not in the business of arresting people for what they say. We are in the business of arresting people who commit crimes," Barbosa said.

Barbosa said police would not arrest anyone who would merely criticize the government in the protests.

"We are not in the business of arresting people who criticize the government. We are in the business of arresting people who commit crimes," he said.

Barbosa said police would not arrest anyone who would merely criticize the government in the protests.

"We are not in the business of arresting people who criticize the government. We are in the business of arresting people who commit crimes," he said.

Rallies to mark Edsa I 22nd anniversary

From page A1

nation of Edsa I, the allegations of government corruption, and calls for the resignation of President Macapagal-Arroyo.

The Feb. 25 protests rally planned by a coalition of religious and civil society groups will signal the start of a series of continued actions meant to "deepen the consciousness of the Filipino people regarding the irregular things happening in our country," Cardinal Ricardo Vidal said over the Church-run Radio Veritas.

Bilgesi, who chairs the Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines' public affairs committee, said the interfaith rally would "also serve as a call for people to act."

Reyes said the theme of the interfaith rally would involve the "emancipation" of the people for collective action in the exalted line of people power."

Schedule

A CBCP-sponsored event, the Christian's Response Against Corruption and Deceit, will be held today at the Caritas compound in Manila. It will be attended by children, child advocates and anti-corruption czars.

The labor party Partido ng Manggagawa will lead a rally of workers in Mendiola on Feb. 25 marches dubbed "Martsa ng Manggagawa Laban sa Kahirapan (March of Workers against Corruption)."

The fisherfolk alliance Pamalakaya said sea-based protest actions would be conducted on Feb. 24 in Navotas City and San Fernando City, La Union, and on Feb. 25 in the cities of Legazpi, Iloilo, Cotabato, Samar and Batangas, and in neighboring towns.

Yesterday, Pamalakaya held a protest action on Manila Bay from Bacoor, Cavite, to the SM mall of Asia to call for Mr. Arroyo's resignation and demand truthfulness in government projects.

The Health Alliance for Democracy, on the other hand, began a signature-gathering activity in Manila calling for Ms. Arroyo's resignation.

Dr. Clemente Ee Tiendo, Ateneo-educated and Bulacan's consolidated on Monday to encourage the Filipino youth to be aware of current events, particularly the scandal surrounding the scrapped NBN project.

The concert will be held at the Ateneo de Manila University in Quezon City.

New women's alliance

A new alliance of women was formed yesterday and added its voice to the growing call for the President's resignation.

Named Babaé.a, or Babae Laban sa Kasinungalian (Women Against Corruption), the alliance composed of 14 women's groups and other individuals vowed to use street protests and other campaigns to remove Ms. Arroyo from Malacañang.

"While most mothers teach their children the value of honesty, this one has taught her family and country the enjoyment of ripping off billions," Babaé.a said in a statement read by Dr. Rose Torres-Yu, dean of the University of the Philippines' College of Arts and Letters.

The group, composed of professionals, artists, activists, students and other women's groups, also fields, said Ms Arroyo had "betrayed the great and trophies, their tradition of heroism and integrity of women leaders and shamelessly displayed the filipino people."

"As women who have endured and proudly held the role of safeguarding the formation and upholding of positive values in society, we cannot help but stand back and allow life-long moral lords and allow life-long moral lords to continue to exercise power that has survived through cheating, lying, stealing and killing," it said.

Among the convenors was Fatima Lourdes Tamayo-Ubarra, who said: "This is a very oppressive government. There's so much double talk, lying and manipulation. We have to end this. We have to go back to the rule of law, where there is honesty and transparency."

Gabriela secretary general Emmi de Jesus said the alliance would send at least 1,000 of its members to the Feb. 25 protest rally.

'Change is over'

Cubao Bishop Honesto Ongtioco said the interfaith rally would emphasize "how violence is not the answer to changing anything."

"We should be calm and try to gain enlightenment and there's more through prayers," Ongtioco said. "Moral renewal should not involve an abrupt change of the person involved, but should come from within the persons themselves. What we need is not a change of face but a change in turn, a change in all of us."

Bilgesi said the interfaith rally was conceived during a meeting on Sunday between the bishops and various sectors of society.

"We had a sharing of our own perceptions regarding what is happening in our country," he said, adding that recommendations on what should be done were made in the latter part of the meeting.

Coalition

According to Reyes, the coalition that planned the interfaith rally is composed of the CBCP, Makati Business Club, Association of Major Religious Superiors of the Philippines, Integrated Bar of the Philippines, Bagong Kalakasan, Concerned Citizens Group, Black & White Movement, Jesus is Lord Movement, Sanggon Filipinas, Solidarity Philippines, Muslim Legal Assistance Foundation, La Salle Brothers, United Church of Christ in the Philippines, Nazarene Council of Churches in the Philippines, Rebol Pag-Asa, and various youth groups and student councils in Metro Manila.

'Different' people power

Reyes' unbridled Jaro Archbishop Angel Lagdameo's statements on Tuesday that civil society groups should lead people power, and that Filipinos should not wait for another people power like the late Manila Archbishop Jaime Cardinal Sin to trigger it.

"Even more than ever, we need to recall the lessons of people power and to we can unite up with an improved version for our times. The core people power will not simply be led by any religious leader a la Cardinal Sin. We can't rely on another Cardinal Sin because no one can play his role. We can't rely on another Cardinal Sin because no one can play his role. We can't rely on another Cardinal Sin because no one can play his role

Galing Pook Awards: LGU projects for common good

From page A1

remained projects chosen for the 2007 Galing Pook Awards, which recognizes programs that serve as models for other towns and cities, with the hope that they will be continued even after new political leaders have taken over.

The awardees are to be formally announced this morning in a press conference at Bayan Restaurant at the Quezon Memorial Circle. Actual awarding will be held in Malacañang on Feb. 28.

Local gov't initiatives

Away from the frauds and gridlocks of national politics, programs to partner effective and sustainable local governments initiatives since 1992.

"While we see the light of hope in local government units, it's quite sad that we're not being inspired by what's happening in the national level," said Dr. Edille Dorotan, the foundation's executive director and former mayor of Iriga, Bicol region. Dorotan himself earned a Galing Pook Award (GPA) for his term during his mayoralty from 1992 to 1998.

The GPA is given to projects that individuals that devised creative solutions to old problems; yielded concrete, measurable results; drew public participation (ranging from schoolchildren, housekeepers, farmers, etc.); can be "replicated" to other LGUs; and can survive changes in the administration, Dorotan explained in an interview yesterday.

It was first handed out in 1993 with the Ayala Institute of Management serving as its secretariat. In 1996, it received a $2 million endowment from the Ford Foundation, and interest earned from that fund has since been sustaining the award-giving body, Dorotan said.

Awardees

One of the 141 projects nominated, the following were chosen for the 2007 GPA by a selection committee chaired by former Socioeconomic Planning Secretary Cielito Habito:

• In Iloilo town, Negros Oriental, a "health insurance program for the poor" made medicines and hospital services more affordable to 75 percent of the households. A reward home was supplied to pay a "coco-teepee" premium of only P120 per year, the town being absolved by the government of it.

If the family can't immediately pay in cash, it can pay "in kind" or render community service.

• In Cebu City, 66 percent of the cases brought before the barangay justice system were resolved—all court, the disputes stemming from neighborhood spats, petty crimes, unpaid debts, minor damage to property, etc. This was after the city's corps of Peace Councils, covering its barangays, invested in training members in conflict resolution.

It was estimated that for every case that was settled, complainants and respondents saved up to P18,000 in legal fees.

• In Infanta, Quezon, a town still reeling from painful memories of "Reming," the killer typhoon which ravaged the population in late 2006, a public-private sector partnership has since restored quick-response teams, mapped areas most prone to floods and landslides, and invested in early warning systems, rescue vehicles and equipment, and regular emergency drills.

• In Isabela, the capitol allotted P4.5 million to subsidize rice and corn production and helped grants farmers fetch higher prices for their harvests. Since it was implemented in 2005, the scheme has benefited some 67,500 rice and 85,000 corn farmers.

Las Piñas, Marikina, Naga

• In Las Piñas City in Metro Manila, a housing program for the urban poor has removed some 16,700 families out of the shame and into decent homes they can call their own for the past 16 years. For the sheer scale of that achievement, it has earned the Galing Pook seal.

• In Marikina since 2004, 18 public schools have been collecting recyclable household items brought by the students each week. Pupils earn "points" for every kilo of materials turned in, and they can exchange these points for pens, notebooks, dictionary and educational toys from a mobile store that visits the campus twice a week.

A total of 238,000 kilos of "waste"—sold at P1.3 million—have since been recovered and diverted from dumpsites and landfills.

• In Naga City, Camarines Sur, Mayor Jesse Robredo has been training future local governance leaders through internships. His City Youth Month program has since tapped 600 participants.

Palma Alliance

Aspiring municipalities said to be consistent competitors to equality for the 45 slots available in the executive and legislative departments of the capital.

• In North Cotabato, there is now the so-called "Palma Alliance." Five municipalities—Pigcawayan, Alamada, Libungan, Midsayap and Aleosan—have decided to combine resources and put up their own road-building crew at a much cheaper alternative to hiring private contractors.

Since 2002, the alliance has opened and repaired 281.45 km of farm-to-market roads, which, in turn, increased farming incomes and reduced transportation costs in their 143 barangays. It currently maintains two construction fleets, each consisting of a bulldozer, a grader, three to four dump trucks and a compactor.

• In San Mateo town in Isabela, farmers have been trained to cultivate mongo to help them rise above poverty, both as organic raw materials in the soil after years of chemical intensive farming.

Introduced in 2000, this cropping pattern now covers a total of 70,000 hectares, yielding additional net earnings of up to P25,000 to P50,000 per hectare.

The high-protein products also helped cure child malnutrition. Many women organizations also turned mongo-based delicacies into a business.

• In San Carlos, watershed areas measuring a total of 5,000 ha are being secured by farmer guards against illegal loggers and are being rehabilitated through regular tree-planting activities. This was after the local government contracted volunteers to pay a levy of 75 centavos per stem of tree cut down from the watersheds.

The collection, amounting to P1.2 million each year, goes to a fund used for watershed protection. Some 215,000 trees have been planted since the project began in 2005.

FINANCIAL EXECUTIVES INSTITUTE OF THE PHILIPPINES (FINEX)

"TIME FOR CLOSURE"

The FINANCIAL EXECUTIVES INSTITUTE OF THE PHILIPPINES (FINEX) joins the call of the Church for "communal action" in our search for the TRUTH behind the National Broadband Network (NBN) deal involving the Arroyo Government and ZTE Corporation, and other scandals involving the present administration (e.g. IMPSA, "Jose Pidal", "Fertilizer Scam", "Hello Garci", Diosdado Macapagal Blvd. project, "Bridges to Nowhere", North and South Rail Projects, Distribution of Cash Gifts in Malacanang, "CyberEd", etc). We believe that the continued failure to resolve these pressing issues scares away investments, unduly increases the risks and costs of doing business, and even induces capital flight.

We, as finance professionals, demand TRANSPARENCY and ACCOUNTABILITY in all government transactions especially when public funds are involved. We likewise vigorously advocate MORAL RENEWAL for our leaders and REFORM in governance.

We firmly believe that it is the constitutional duty and moral obligation of the administration of President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo to ensure that the facts of all cases of corruption and anomalous transactions not only be brought to light but be fully resolved; that those found and proven to be involved, regardless of their closeness to the President, her family, or her administration, be immediately prosecuted and punished; and that every effort shall be made to reform our institutions.

In light of the recent revelations of Rodolfo "Jun" Lozada, Jose "Joey" De Venecia III and Secretary Romulo "Romy" Neri, we support the following concrete forms of action:

- That President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo revoke EO 464, refrain from invoking her "executive privilege" and encourage members of her cabinet, the members of the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP), the Philippine National Police (PNP) and other government officials to testify truthfully in the Senate, House of Representatives, Ombudsman, or the courts, as the case maybe, under the principle of full transparency;

- That Secretary Romulo "Romy" Neri and other witnesses disclose to the general public "the whole truth" about the NBN deal and other government contracts, regardless of the personalities involved;

- That President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo personally and immediately direct her cabinet, consultants, advisers, the PNP, AFP, National Bureau of Investigation (NBI), and more especially her Secretary of the Department of Justice, to protect the basic human rights of the witnesses and the Filipino people;

- That the administration of President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo refrain from using the coercive powers of the State, its funds, personnel and resources to intimidate people who speak the truth and who are loyal to our country.

We believe that if President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo and her allies fail to immediately carry out the foregoing actions, she will lose her credibility, moral authority and consequently her claim to her presidency.

We urge the Senate to continue with its investigations in aid of legislation to guard against corruption and as an effective check and balance to the abuses of the executive branch. We express our unqualified support to the witnesses who have spoken the truth, and those who will come out to speak the truth, under extreme danger to themselves and their families.

We call on all concerned citizens to join us in making these demands, while remaining vigilant and critically engaged in discerning what courses of action to take in order to restore our national dignity.

40 Celebrating the Past, Embracing the Future

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER

OPINION

Panic time

EDITORIAL

IF THE SENATE HEARINGS ON THE CONTROVERSIAL National Broadband Network project were indeed nothing more than inquiries "in aid of lawmaking," as Press Secretary Ignacio Bunye claims, why is Malacañang moving belatedly to manage the issues raised in the investigation? Going by the presidential spokesman's own logic, the cacophony of stories and events clashing in the public arena cannot be anything but an attempt to drown out what Malacañang patronizingly calls "political noise."

The decision of the Department of Justice to investigate the NBN deal, including the allegedly anomalous and now abandoned contract with China's ZTE, seems curiously timed. But the decision of Ombudsman Merceditas Gutierrez to finally launch an investigation in our unruly customs, it is downright suspicious. As two lawyers have pointed out, the belated sign of activity (after six months in which the Office of the Ombudsman did virtually nothing) seems designed to "kill" the Senate investigation.

Malacañang itself has been busy the past week with "fellowship" dinners among Cabinet members and "briefings" by other high officials. The administration has also seen fit to engage the media more assiduously; the instant press briefing it held with Executive Secretary Eduardo Ermita, Socioeconomic Planning Secretary Ronaldo Zamora and Bunye last Monday, to refute talk of the President as "evil," was unusual.

Perhaps the surest sign of panic was the "solidarity walk" the Cabinet took with President Macapagal-Arroyo the other day. Meant to emphasize administration unity, the stage-managed walk inside the Palace grounds conspicuously placed the two Cabinet members most affected by rumors of defection close to the President: Neri walked right beside Ms Arroyo, while Finance Secretary Margarito Teves flanked Neri.

It was anything but spontaneous. Neri, for instance, went to the Palace only to take part in the photo opportunity; he was not even included in the President's next meeting in the Premier Guest House, the ostensible reason for the walk.

And it was anything but original. President Arroyo had done the same thing before, in July 2005, in the wake of the resignation of the so-called "Hyatt 10," high-ranking officials who parted ways with the administration because of the "Hello, Garci" scandal. President Joseph Estrada did it too, in 2000, even shadow-boxing part of the way as loyal Cabinet members, including Mar Roxas, then the trade secretary, looked on. In both instances, the official image was deceptive. The Hyatt 10 included some of the members of Ms Arroyo's inner circle, and Estrada' resignation in November 2000 was a turning point in the crisis that led to Estrada's ouster.

Thus, and perhaps without meaning to, the bright boys of Malacañang stirred unpleasant memories—unpleasant, that is, for any occupant of Malacañang.

All these maneuvers, in the context of the cover-up of the Lozada "abduction," It is now clear that the administration, with the support of the police, was engaged in an attempt to prevent Rodolfo Lozada Jr., the ZTE-NBN witness, from testifying in the Senate. There was, in a word, a cover-up operation. But it has also become clear that after Lozada finally made the fateful decision to testify, the administration has been hard at work at a cover-up of the cover-up.

Consider, out of many possible examples, the inexplicable generosity of a man like Deputy Executive Secretary Manuel Gaite. Apparently, he is moneyed enough to "lend" a mere acquaintance (according to his own story, Lozada was only environmentalist on him by another environ ter of the Cabinet) half a million pesos of his own money. Let's think about that: P500,000, signed over with a single signature like it was petty cash, and without as much as a repayment plan. That Gaite expects the public to believe this blatant lie is a sign of panic.

What's next? Perhaps the entire military and police top brass will appear jointly on TV to announce their support for the President? Perhaps the new Speaker of the House, Prospero Nograles, will rule into Malacañang with a retinue of congressmen?

None of this builds confidence, or restores credibility. As the coming colloquial expression puts it, "Buwenas na 'yan."

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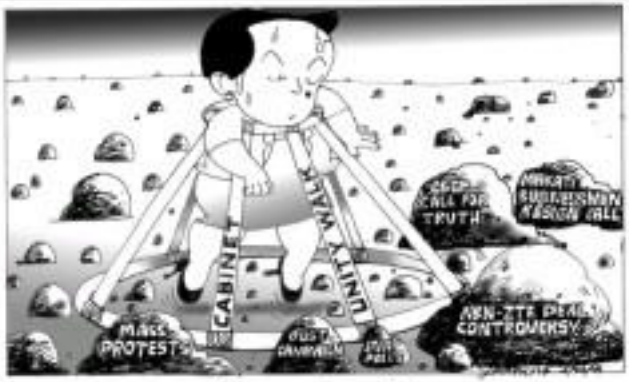

Strange tango?

VIEWPOINT

Juan L. Mercado

RIZALISM RIGARDO ARGAWA DEWITT ULICE Hall ordered by Mr. Hyatt Hill (Ed) to open wide the media outlets to criticism. His emphasis was: Always what Mark Twain wrote: "Only presidents, editors and people with tapeworm have the right to wear the editorial 'we.'"

In "Beneficent purpose" [Inquirer, 2/14/08], this column argued that under the canons of press responsibility, HB 142 would draw government 39 staff into editors' chairs. Sec. Ignacio Bunye's Senate Bill 1178 is cut from the same cloth. Both threaten fines and jail to force airing of replies.

Tagging suspects as "Maoists" or "Christian" will be punishable. If HB 189 becomes law. Representatives Angara, Pangalian Balindong and Iñigo Hontiveros are co-authors. Such labels perpetuate stereotypes of Muslims as scary, lawbreaking persons," they said. "This is not an acceptable pattern."

But like other democratic societies, our Constitution provides: "No law shall be passed abridging the freedom of speech, expression, and of the press," the Cebu Citizens Press Council observed. There are no ifs and buts here.

"Media cannot be held subject to public," the CCPC reminded. "[L]icense, in essence is: add what not to publish." But a right need right to apply operates at a command. And no dim meaning of religious affiliations. "These are prior restraints."

Led by Chief Justice Reynato Puno, the Supreme Court underscored this constitutional injunction. It struck down last week Department of Justice and National Telecommunications Commission warnings against airing the "Hello, Garci" tapes precisely because they constituted "prior restraint" and challenged "the most cherished of civil rights, the freedom of expression."

So why did the Kapisanan ng mga Brod. karats "inexplicably" join the NTC in a joint "understanding" statement that seemed to line up with the regime's recent unusual warnings? The Supreme Court issued its ruling hours. This strangely contrasts with the

KBP's opposition to the Angara bill.

Nobody are like parachutes," we are told. "They work only when open." Inquirer's reply does not open mind. Its stance:

"Our interest to media groups around the country. Their position in Art. 1 inherent objections and self-regulation, media already groups right of reply to persons written about or criticized.

"This bill not to decide, at early as two weeks ago, to no longer pursue this bill... For various the COPC nothing any decision to no longer work day that bill in view of various media and bars. There may also be some practical difficulties in enforcement."

Rep. Sarenedin Abante agrees to junk this sorry chestnut from the fire, ship. Monica Pascual-villa will dialogue with media, in his Bonny 'cut'. Backlash: the media "unfair" doubling from the media in the last elections.

"These bills are subject to change," Angara added. "We realize editorial functions are privately exercised prerogatives. Nonetheless, we appeal to our friends in media for fairness and intellectual honesty."

Angara's decision to withdraw HB 142 is welcome. Both legislator and journalist share a common commitment to free flow of information. It will buttress on-going efforts by the group to reinforce internal mechanisms to ensure adherence to ethical standards. Ateneo de Manila University School of Law dean Sedfrey Candelaria Agustin dismisses as "hardline" pronouncements of being power brokers in this country."

Island has tag-line. Before Many journalists are also turned off by the "tribalism" of some col-

Resident evil

THERE'S THE RUB

Conrado de Quiros

JOSE LOZADA WOULD TELL THE WORLD upon being presented by the senators last Monday was just that Romulo Neri called GMA "evil" but that he did so at least 10 times. It wasn't just during his meeting with Senators Lacson and Madrigal that Neri said it, he said it every time he talked about the "ecosystem of corruption" in this country (Lozada's phrase) or the "web of dysfunction" in procurement (Neri's). Lozada's phrase. Neri would always conclude about the matter that lay at the heart of the web: "the evil," he said.

Nine suddenly Neri can't remember what he said at least 10 times not very long ago. Which prompted one of the senators to ask sarcastically if he was really bright, as the rumors he has touched of his suggests, given his inability to remember this simple detail.

I myself would ask the same question, if in quite another context. Someone intruded to me last Monday that Neri was just in worried mode in contrast to Lozada who was in heroic mode, but I wonder if Neri is really showing sensitivity to anyone. And I do not mean sensitivity in the context in which Lozada uses "survival," which is not just the survival of the body but the survival of the soul, not just the survival of physical life but spiritual life. I mean that simply in the primitive, instinctive, sense of self-defense. You have to ask: Does Neri really think he can survive government, or even life, after having supposedly called GMA evil?

He may of course, deceive the public about it. He may, of course, tell the world he can't remember anything about it. But do you think he can succeed he can deceive GMA about it, that he can lie easy to GMA about it, that he can convince GMA he can't remember ever saying she was evil? Other allies have been punished more for less. Look at Jose de Venecia. In Neri's case because maybe is deadly also survival mode. In a brute-eat-brute, free against-the-question: is he really bright?

"If he the judge of that" was how he replied some months ago when asked if it didn't bother him that he was taking the cowardly and unprincipled, way out. I said then, and I say now, he was wrong. History will be the judge of that, and it will judge you harshly. This time more than the last.

I say now as well: I will root for La Salle against Ateneo in UAAP games.

Still, we have Neri in flesh, however he is in more flagrante delicto, for the pettiest sort of deception, the cutthroat savagery of Malacañang and her rule. "Evil" is a word that does not easily evade the genre of political discourse, being reserved only for the weakest of mind-boggling anecdotes, or for rulers who presume all that is good and decent in life. Has listened to the lies and deceptions over the past couple of weeks and you are left with only that word to describe this regime. It is not bad, it is not wrong, it is evil.

This was especially so last Monday when it became clear that that Neri is a wimp that Lozada was sent to Hong by people who meant him double harm. It not Neri Lozada's wife and siblings who were determined to know where he was, and if not the media which was determined to telephone in their quest. Lozada might now be helping plants grow in Los Baños. Ironically the one who turned indignantly duty did him the immense favor of securing him. Neri is no show. The senators' own steadfast, which included ousting the scene of the crime, and which included securing pictures of the person surrounded in the surrounding, were ready to down their version of events had injury been done to bodies of the senators themselves.

Since Finnerud would quip across point while Lozada recounted the series with the aid of a videotape: "Did anybody shoot, 'Pandit' Pen-

is it?" In much laughter from the gallery. You could not look at the videotape, particularly the part where Iran security chief Angel demands genuine with a hand slicing his throat—what a fine scene, dapat!—and not remember those shouts from not very long ago. Kidnapping? Everyone involved in Lozada's securing should be charged with frustrated homicide.

Now else call something like that but evil? How else call a regime determined to hide witness pillage with easy murder beyond?

Is it possible that Lozada's going to happen over the next few days or weeks, but I do know one thing: The people who are responsible for this evil get away with it again, they deserve help but Lozada. One is tempted to say heaven help Jenny Neri as well, but why should heaven help those who will not help themselves? They get away with this again, and Lozada's sacrifice will not only have gone in vain—and what a cost! See it is, one five of us will ever be able to make us to witnesses—it will add treacherous dimensions to the adage that no good deed ever goes unpunished. These people get away with this again, and we will have fattened rascals in the scaffold.

I don't know what's going to happen over the next few months or years, but I do know one thing: These people get away with this again, can be sure because we delude ourselves with the thought, "Hayaan na lang, alam'Yan gusto na ng mamatay." Hayaan na lang, alam'Yan gusto na ng mamatay. Hayaan na lang, alam'Yan gusto na ng mamatay. Hayaan na lang, alam'Yan gusto na ng mamatay.

Questions for Lozada, Lacson et al.

THOSE WHO THINK/WHO BELIEVE, AFTER closely following the recent hearings in the Senate on the $329.5 million fertilizer fund scam, that the principal objective is grasp of opposition leaders of Administration Buddy-Buddy Senators is in order to bring down the government. To many observers, his recent testimony tended to show that Lozada was not overturn of what he claimed to be a kidnapping by government officials, but on the contrary, their wives grand-budget by opposition leaders, led by Senators Panfilo Lacson and Juanito Madrigal, to set up the authorities who, pursuance of national or congressional inquiry the Presidency, Jenny Arroyo. To many observers, it was to all and Lacson statements, records and advertising, with all the angles covered.

Part of the credibility of Lozada stems from his training in religion and guidance, a veteran of presentation by the Arroyo administration the "telling the truth." Or to keen observers, that impression was being blown by far to be the past few days, as it became apparent that he was a part of a deep-laid political conspiracy to bring down the government and hoodwink the nation—even as he kept seeking help from government officials for his case by self-financed, went before the Senate the entire time.

* * *

It was Environment Secretary Lito Atienza who first raised in the Senate the possibility of a grand design and himself that Lozada was the tool. Atienza, who is known to be close to Lacson, was quick to follow this argument and I must say that I tend to agree. For instance, Sen. Felipe Bellera, president of La Salle Green Hills, testified that Lozada and his family had been walking to him since consultant of Bellera's family. Bellera, the subject that Lozada discontributed from the photo from Hong Kong, he doubted that he was held against his will, but later in the evening he asked to be brought to La Salle and the police were surprised to see his family already there. And yet, in the early morning of Feb. 6, as Senior Supt. Saul Mamaradlo pointed out, even though Lozada was already with his family in the evening of Feb. 5, he still left that day for Hong Kong—and the airport—which the Court of Appeals claims was

Political Tidbits

Belinda Olivares-Cantoria

later). Part of the grand design to make the kidnap/cover-up angle more believable?

* * *

Lacson has a lot to explain on his part in the people he is the colleagues as well. As Atienza pointed out, how come he knew ahead of everyone that Lozada was emerging, that he was navigating to London from Hong Kong, and that he was arriving on Feb. 10? And how come he was at the airport that afternoon with his aides, apparently awaiting his arrival? Did he have surgeons at arms who was sent by the chauffeur to fetch Lozada? Did Lacson plan to brief the senator first? He said later that he was simply being magnanimous. Or is it because he was manipulating the situation all along, since December, when Lacson and his people first met with Lozada at the Peninsula Manila, are still to get them to run against the government.

* * *

By their own admission, Lacson and Madrigal have spent more than a year looking for the "smoking gun" to raise a "particular fraud" of P329 million that would enable him to free comfortably if he should resign from government. Isn't this hilarious? Well, to his credit, instead that big amount, Lozada simply claimed irregularities in the amount of P130 million. The question Lozada called now is, if there was a "particular fraud" for which there must have been one for Lozada, no matter how immaterial his lifestyle as a high roller and one perpetually preoccupied with money (he asked the Senate to pay for what he spent in Hong Kong), then how much is the "particular fraud"? That too, how come he disclosed only

more the P500,000 that Deputy Executive Secretary Manuel Cojuangco "lent" him as spending money in Hong Kong?

* * *

The senate celebrates their tomorrow in Malolos Bulacan, the 22nd anniversary of People Power I, as no time perhaps is a more relevant to observe this than now, when the nation is once again caught in political turbulence and is further torn being tainted. But despite all the pain and troubles, we must continue to recognize the glory of those days of bravery and sacrifice, and of being irrefutable proof of our unity and resolve. Emcee for our presence and future liberties nation.

The Edsa People Power Commission has done up a long list of activities to mark this event in the metropolis and in the provinces as well as in our overseas missions around the world. One of the meaningful observations is the 24/7 interview Cardinal Sincere and I will have with Fr. Jerico S. Ocampo, S.J., at 8 p.m. on Sunday, Feb. 24, when the Jesuit priest will be interviewed on Radio Veritas. On the side visit to the outside world of the people's uprising against Marcos' tyranny, after his soldiers fortified his mansion in Malacañan. I'm also happy to note that at the Edsa-crossing monument, the Edsa Shrine, a commemorative, led by Sto Presidente Jose de Castro on Monday, Feb. 25, at 7:30 a.m., Mag-sa Kawal Pasasalamat will be one of two cultural movements to be staging a play of the other is Cecile Guidote Alvarez's Sabel Sisters Alliance the people from country through representation). Also in synod Foundation was set up for years (rally and other professionals, led by Sen. Ed Espiritu and former Senator Helena, as a platform of the Edsa Revolution, formed Kaisa of the Philippines after Edsa, through its main program of extending financial support to the widows and orphans of soldiers killed or maimed in action.

The question also includes a carnado laying at Liniguan ng mga Bayani monument at 7:30 a.m., to be led by President Macapagal-Arroyo, and the 8:30 p.m. Edsa commemorative blues at the Edsa Shrine on Sunday, Feb. 24, followed by a procession of Marian images, including a Black Nazarene, with others the idols of Edsa-wild side, and church doors.

Road safety

A DOG TO BE IS BUSY A CAMEL IS TO A DESIGN. I NEED it, to get to work in the morning and home in the evening, that me the name of the bus playing the Statendam, only many spots the bus are standing over the seven drivers, and I can go with the minor vehicles a second.

My white boarding next to the hinge of the asphalt jungle dates back from my college years. It graduated in time (an event for me then, itself).

Say a journey for a trip that would last more than an hour in the middle of the day was a challenge. Tons of sweat and loads of their mortality may in the bus/commuter arena even before I reached Buendia Avenue. I thought taking a bus would never be a problem. My meager allowance of P100 was enough for a two-way bus ride but times a week. But when bus operators got a two increase from the Land Transportation and Franchising Regulatory Board (LTFRB), I had no option but to take jeepney again.

The reason for my hate for public buses, buses, buses, is still that myself replace a jeepney every now and then, but that is another story. Buses are a microcosm of everything else in Filipino. In fact, how people behave—and misbehave—inside buses has always been an interesting subject for social scientists and students alike.

That bus ride was a combination of chocolate: you never know what to expect. Today you might encounter a person coming beside you, asleep about your name, mobile phone number, destination and sender/person else. Tomorrow you might be standing on the side, reaching for whatever you can hold on to as you enjoy your pulse (and pass him) every time the bus encounters a bump.

Once I had the misfortune to take the same bus as a man in his 30s whose attitude was as if he owned it. Let's call him Super Gangster. It was the rush hour, but the driver was bent on finishing all the segments of the route. Everybody's presence was ignored, some passengers had to stand for as long as two stops. Super Gangster joined in. He generously hurled insecurities at the poor driver for more than 45 minutes. His worst line? "Sht! na talaga, pare. Bitin gumitong tawagan ko nasa Puerto Manila." When he got off at the Ayala, after a fare of a disappointing P8, Super Gangster muttered some nasty words for him ear. Super Gangster didn't care the day he is.

Practicing the Gospel is not confined within the four corners of a church. Quite often, you will find an "evangelist" inside a bus. These are guys that in polo shirt and slacks who carry their bundle of tracts of "testimonies" which anyone takes them seriously. But this doesn't deter them from distributing to the writer, envelopes and pleading for "donations." (Anyone knows if they know what they are doing?)

Apparently a bus is also a nice place to sell certain goods. Vendors of various items, from bottled water to ornamentals approach every seat in search of willing buyers. The most memorable among them are those selling sampaguita and pandan. They would distribute five sampaguita together with a card stating that they need financial help for an urgent operation.

Claiming upon people you have not seen for a long time can also take place during bus rides. Don't be surprised if one day you find yourself seated next to your high school class buddy or prom queen.

On what I have been asked by directions by strangers who were not sure where SM North Edsa is located. There were times when I had to give up my seat to elderly lady carrying a lot of stuff. I don't do it in my pop poise. It is simply the most sensible thing to do in such circumstance.

In terms of cleanliness, buses deserve a grade that a refugee camp can commend. I am not exaggerating when I say that the conductors has emerging from my toilets in the wood-on backs of the seats. But passengers share the blame for that, some of us seem unable to distinguish between a bus and a trash can.

The driver and the conductor of a bus are the highway's farmers and fields. Our riders on the other for a reasonable rate. Every driver has his own style. Some are very contentious running right or left. Drivers just waves in and out of the lanes like Paul Walker in "The Fast and the Fast two."

In addition to their skills in driving, bus crews have also learned a lifetime running passengers. "Malapag pa, may sapasit pa!," even if the bus has become one big can of sardines. Others are more concerned about beating other buses in the race from bus stop.

Listening to the exchanges between drivers and conductors can be amusing and encouraging. In facts, MMDA and city traffic enforcers are "saints." They call their sampaguita vendors in Mandaluyong "sigang-sigang," "sare-sa-mga" on their way to obtaining. I would say the conductor counting their collection for the day and beat the driver inquire, "Bilis-galaw!" and "Kaliwa-kanan!"

An article in Reader's Digest about Asian buses cited international studies showing that "powerful combo of bus owners plant tree-driven pressure-cooker." That makes up everything. Bus drivers and conductors bear the responsibility of moving their daily quota to keep their families' body and soul together.

"A ship in harbor is safe, but that is not what ships are built for," wrote John A. Shedd in "Safe from my Arms." Similarly, bus in the terminal is safe, but that is not what buses are built for.

Bus bum rush are not reborn we are on a bus! Nobody has the answer, not even the land Transportation Office, I guess. We city dwellers have grown accustomed to overloading and reckless driving. We hardly notice if the driver and the conductor are suffering from sleep deprivation. All that matters to us is that we get to our office on time.

It's time we call for improvements in road travel safety. There are just too many deaths and injuries resulting from reckless caused by ill-prepared drivers and bad roads. Media we should start telling bus owners to help their drivers and conductors. And passengers like me should assume our duty to be more conscientious. Commuters should occupy vacant seats before they register home or give our licenses to bus drivers. The same old practices produce the same old results. Let's hit the high road soon.

Tomorrow I'll be riding a bus again. I am prepared for anything. But not for a pickpocket or an accident.

Bernard B. Dacanay, JD, works as a researcher in consumer rights and publications company in Quezon City.

NOTICE TO YOUNGBLOOD CONTRIBUTORS:

Send your contributions by e-mail to youngblood@inquirer.com.ph together with your address, age and the school you're in and/or employed to. If illustrated, the photo must be in holding size of the computer you work with. Contributions to Youngblood should not have been previously published.

Young Blood

Bernard B. Dacanay

We want to know what the young are thinking about. What are their thoughts on current issues? We welcome contributions from the (mostly) young and below.—Ed.

Rise to your full height

Human Face

Ma. Gloria P. Reyes

Minimum and maximum

The Long View

Manuel L. Quezon III

Without truth, there can be no real freedom

FREEDOM'S CHERISHED IN HELLO OPEN by much. This is affirmed by Jesus in the Gospel of John 8:32: "And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall set you free." That is why every opportunity to bring out the truth is precious. For when truth is suppressed, there's no complete freedom.

Freedom is a wonderful blessing because with it, we can experience a really meaningful life. The controversy of Rodolfo "Jun" Lozada in the Senate hearing attests to the validity of this observation. His conviction and honesty are like a breath of life to a dying nation. Thank God that hope is still alive in persons like Lozada.

It is very ironical that here for the Philippines military from someone whose father came from a country enemy, while those of Filipino descent are the ones destroying the very same country that gave them life. But Lozada has proved that, in his case, ordained ship by choice is more powerful and meaningful than citizenship by birth. His choice to tell the truth, even though he loses his family and his home, says a lot about his character.

While we are inspired by Lozada's courage in the face of adversities, we are scandalized by the actions of people on the other side of the fence. To those who shredded him, those who threatened official documents to show that he was going to commit an official function, those who are crying their eyes for a citizenship loss, those who, instead of honoring our Constitution, are trying their very best to suppress it, we appeal to them to listen to God's voice in their consciences, and to repent and practice a righteous life.

We say, finally, that country is great not by bending the scriptures. In Philippians 2:3, the apostle Paul said "Do nothing out of selfish ambition or pride. But in humility, each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others." May there will be more Jun Lozadas.

—REV. ROMEO L. LUCES,
associate minister,
Jaro Evangelical Church,
rvl.2928@yahoo.com

GMA's apologists refusal to see rot in gov't

BELINDA OLIVARES-CUNANAN PHOTO is businesswoman than Rodolfo Noel "Jun" Lozada engaged in irregularities while he was an official of a government corporation, and she questions his credibility ("Belinda Ibarra's own sins," Inquirer, 2/12/08) that's exercised her by religious groups backing Lozada play blind to the double standard. She says "No wonder people are so confused."

No, Ms. Cunanan, we are not confused. *We are fairly aware of the rampant corruption in government.* The Church, for its part, doesn't play blind to use the corruption as basis for its investigation.

What's more bothersome and alarming is the refusal of Gloria Macapagal Arroyo's apologists (including an Inquirer columnist) to see the corruption and the continuing efforts of this government to cover it up. The apologists see the sins guilty of double standard. The Gloria Magsaysay exposé was not that different from Joey de Venecia III's. Lozada's part may not be equal to that of Chavit Singson's, but it also exposes corruption to the highest level.

I hope CBCP Chair Bishop Nol Arw his part and show a Christian. And I hope the press will also relentlessly expose corruption and not cast doubts on the sins who expose them.

—PERRY ROAS,
perryboy@gmail.com

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LETTERS

Behind every successful person is a 'terrorist'

"TITHE" (INQUIRER, 1/28/08), Rt. Gonzalo de Quiros, wakes up the student in me than I time to teach. I remember getting up early every single school day for just to be with their classmates, but to learn and learn from the people we consider as terrorists here.

We, I do remember on occasions calling them funny names just to get back at them for their being strict and all. We even placed cockroaches in their room and had a good laugh when they felt for it. I remember the morning camp activities where we had to sleep over and where our teachers had to make sure every one was safe and secure because to boys couldn't be trapped from peeping into the ladies' room. And I guess everybody can relate to the feeling of having a wet towel on one of them. That's all gone now, and so are some of them.

Now that I'm also teacher, I realize that we have their influence and patience to teach me all that I learned to succeed in the career I've chosen. I could have been a fighter, or a professional and so a loser. To them, I guess we all considered reaching as being a teacher as just "another" profession that, I thought to myself, why should I have to speak, read and write a second language when I'm just going to stay in the Philippines? But look at me now, speaking, reading and writing English to be able to relate and express myself in the country where God has brought me.

To all those who taught us and patiently guided us into what and who we are all now, I'm sure every handsome would like to say "Thank you very much!"

And thanks to Sir Quiros for a very fine article dedicated to all the individuals in this entire profession back home.

—STEVEN REYES,
xxxxxxxx@yahoo.com

PRO-LUZON rally 'resurrects' Senator Aquino's protest in the 2007 Senate race. AQ SAYO

A 'White Knight' drawn into the 'Dark Side'

IN BASKETBALL, YOU CALL IT A CLEAN block. But the "extraordinary" experience it made former—misapplied.

Jolan Arroyo, that's who, it was parkers. The night of him shouldering and lowering a hapless and frightened witness whom the Senate itself had treated to unmerciful order to force him to testify. The good senator was scolding Rodolfo "Jun" Lozada, his wife and open for supposedly "cheapening" the acts of habitual corpse and umpire rules though the family already "had" him.

Hint of all, it's were for new featured who wanted me and said he was taken by men he didn't know, and on the following day, he was brought to me his with "reasons" who were supposedly his "protectors." I no would like all the rents available at my disposal in order to recover him. Of all people, I thought Senator Arroyo would understand the predicament of people whose rights were being trampled upon, whose physical well-being was being threatened.

His astounding happened before the arrest could diminish the witness—which he's to believe that Malacañang executive is a work here. Lozada, in anguish before the Inquisitor questioning him, called the rabbit fly' sighting that he also talked to the senator's aside. To attain the Joker could only famously want Lozada see or even around with his wife. Which bored Lozada to recite that it was Joker himself who brought up the topic. Surprise! I laughed and thanked as if my favorite basketball team had made a clean block and went on to score on the home bid.

But was not seeing one of my former favorite politicians being reduced to this—second "White Knight falling into molecules of tatters at the Dark Side.

They say wisdom comes with age. But taken, pray tell, does Gloria Macapagal Arroyo do to resemble honorable and wise man and woman that they suddenly get offered with a degenerative disease that wreaks havoc on their moral judgment? Many of my friends and coworkers are asking the same thing. What happened to Jun and Arroyo?

We, what happened to you, Joker?

—LUCRECIO BE LEON,
dbaubert1@yahoo.com

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aqui en Mindanao at sa buong Pilipinas,
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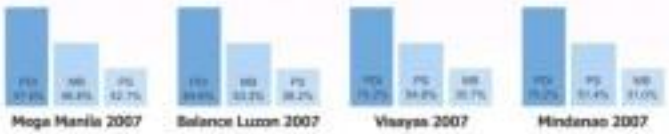

Nielsen Media Index Wave 2 2007 figures. Among broadsheet readers yesterday.

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER

Dare to ask. Be an Inquirer.

INQUIRER Southern Luzon

MEMBERS of the FCR Band play marimbas/xylophones during practice at the Guinobatan Sports Center in Guinobatan town in Albay

Brass band nurtures young dreams

By Jeannelaa Rales
Guinobatan, Albay

FOR FOUR YEARS NOW, 14-year-old Bernard Angelo Bregunza has been cleaning vehicles after school in a car wash center in Guinobatan, Albay. He gets P50 from the part-time job so he can help feed his family.

But since he joined the FCR (Francisco Concepcion Rodayos) Band in June last year, Bregunza had to drop work on weekends so he could attend practice sessions. He does not mind losing a portion of his earnings since, he said, being in the brass band will mean more money somedays.

"This is one of the FCR Band's objectives—to help its underprivileged members attain their dreams by providing scholarships and at the same time, conduct music education to bring back the glorious days of musicians in Albay," explained band organizer Hermant Rodayos.

BOMBO. Angelo Bregunza, 14, hopes to become a musician with the help of the FCR Band.

Fewer musician

Bregunza, a high school student at the Marcial O. Rafols Memorial School, wants to be a musician, but, he said, he could not fulfill his dream if he relied only on his family and a measly income from washing cars.

Bregunza belongs to the top section of his batch and is intelligent and diligent, said Rodayos, a pianist and owner of a photo studio in Guinobatan.

The band leader said he grew up seeing a lot of musicians in the province. "But as time passed, I have observed a decline in their number," he said, surmising that it could be due to financial difficulties. Most old instruments and learning how to play them are expensive, he said.

Rodayos said it was his uncle, a master tuner and lawyer based in New York, who had thought of putting up the band and named it after his father.

"He would send me an instrument every month. Now, we have more than 150 pieces," Rodayos said. In his collection are flutes, clarinets, trombones, saxophones and trumpets.

Now 54, Rodayos's uncle, who requests anonymity, shoulders all the band expenses. "He was born in this town, raised in this and has been living in America for about 50 years now," his nephew said.

The brass band was finally formed in Aces last year. It has more than 50 members—the youngest are 9 years old and the oldest at 22—but still short of a full march band of 130, Rodayos said.

It gives an opportunity for the children to learn how to play the instruments, Rodayos said. "We lend them the instruments for free," he said, adding that the young members' first lesson was how to set and take care of them.

He confessed to difficulty in teaching the children at first because they were not yet used to it. "Some did not even perform their lessons," he said. "But with patience, hard work and strict discipline, most of them were able to learn."

Andres band members of the Mariners' Polytechnic Colleges Foundation (MPCF) help Rodayos in realizing every weekend.

Student teachers

Amore Cornejo, a sophomore student in marine transportation at the MPCF, said she and her fellow band members visit the town and teach other members on station basis.

The FCR Band has already learned 12 musical pieces and has performed twice. Rodayos plans to build a grand presentation orchestra, where his uncle himself is a conductor.

He said the members were thankful to the municipal government of Guinobatan for letting them use the town sports center for free on weekends. Upon entering the practice arena, one sees small groups scattered in the bleachers playing tunes from different instruments at the same time, creating a not-so-pleasant sound. But playing a song together is a totally different story.

One would marvel at the euphonious sound and be bored to hear and, maybe, have a fiddle, to the '70s hit "The Love Boat."

This June, the band members will receive P1,000 each for tuition or "a little more than P500," Rodayos said. "They can use the remaining money for school supplies." He said he also gives scholarship to those who's taking up nursing or other medical courses.

Rodayos said the group planned to put up a self-sustaining foundation where earnings from its performances could be channeled for education.

Laguna business' loss, art's gain

By Marlowe Cinco
San Pablo City

SUCCESSFUL ENTREPRENEUR Carlito Ortega never thought he would become a sculptor someday. In fact, it never crossed his mind that he would tread the artist's path, believing that there's no money in this profession.

In the scheme of things, however, Ortega found himself sculpting brass pieces in his home garden in San Pablo City in Laguna not long ago. He had spent 15 years selling veterinary drugs and contract growing of poultry.

"When you start using your brain rather than your mind, that's when you have to stop framing a business," he says.

Ortega decided to retire from his trade, sensing that he has an eye for the arts.

ONE OF ORTEGA'S brass sculptures

Exposure

His first few works involved gazebos designed for friends and making stage sheets for schools. He recalls his early frustrations when people would alter his works.

He hired a carpenter so he would learn to be skilled in putting together metal sheets. He also read books on his newfound trade.

Through consistent practice in the use of the sculpting tools and a welding machine, he honed his craft. "It's what [people] told a Baron burning inside you so you can always improve," he says.

In 2001, Ortega held his first exhibit at a show of fashion designer Pedo Tuazon. It was Tuazon who encouraged him to join the "Hugis del Sol" (Shiny of the Sun) and gave him exposure.

The Hugis del Sol is a group of micro-entrepreneurs in Laguna, Batangas and Quezon engaged in promoting arts and culture in the provinces.

Born in Balubaran, Ortega brings to life the Maranao culture in his sculptures. His known works include the "Sibotong (a courtship ritual usually described with the head of a horse and limbs of an animal), Maranao instruments, and characters from Filipino folklore.

He consistently works on brass although he is equally knowledgeable in other media, there, which he covers as flexible, only when harmful, is similar to his personality, he says. "I am bound by promises."

Now 47, Ortega says he does not want to sculpt a subject he is not familiar with. "If I want to make a carabao, I would go to Padre Garcia to see and mingle with several 200 carabaos there," he says.

He talks of sleepless nights conceptualizing, sketching a design 20 to 30 times, and learning the drawings later. "That was when I go to my working area, there is still spontaneity and imaginations," he says.

It was a matter of delicacy, he tells it, when an artist perceives beauty from a piece of bamboo metal or wood.

No regrets

Ortega says he does not regret realizing his passion for the arts late since he has already saved enough to support his family. This way, he adds, he will not have to compromise creativity with market demands and art critics—which is how a business normally operates.

His works are currently on display in Gallery Kine of SM Megamall. On Saturdays, he conducts the "Carlito's Workshop," a demo-cum-discussion on metal sculpting, at his home.

While most artists do not open their working areas to the public, Ortega says the awakening is reserved a social obligation that allows him to share his skills with other people.

"I may not become rich because of this, but at least it is already self-sustaining," he says.

RELIEF FOR FIRE VICTIMS. Senator Juan Miguel Zubiri, Chairman of the Senate Committee on Urban Planning, Housing and Resettlement, assisted by Representative Vincent "Bonglong" Crisologo distributes basic food items such as milk, rice and canned goods, blankets, mattresses and clothes to victims of a fire that displaced around 500 poor families in West Riverside, Barangay Del Monte in Quezon City. Zubiri also conferred with Crisologo, Councilor Bal Belmonte and Barangay Chairman Juan Sta. Maria on fire victims' request for the Senator to help their association buy the land, a property of the Philippine Veterans Bank. Zubiri said he will also look into other aspects such as local and national taxes necessary for the proposed acquisition to be resold/lease at affordable price to the victims.

Across the NATION

Assistant Editor Tony Bergonia

NEWSBRIEFS

6 Filipino workers of gaming firm decry harassment

CLARK FREEPORT—SIX FILIPINO employees of a gaming company owned by Hong Kong businessman Jack Lam and once humiliated for alleged cronies of former President Joseph Estrada are fighting their alleged illegal dismissal.

While denying that the employees also dealt with a criminal case of syndicated estafa that was filed after the labor dispute.

Dominic Ayson, Lucelino Agustin, Rosenna Capuz, Satanic Dedicatoria, Princelyn Danish Manlapaz and Wendelino Dalisay, all of whom are still employed at the casino-hotel complex operated by Fontana Leisure Corp., filed a complaint for illegal dismissal, underpayment of wages and 13th month pay against Clark Resort Hotel and Amusement Corp. (CRHAC).

CRHAC has run the Fontana Leisure Park here after Lucio Co and Robin Tan reportedly sold shares in Lani in 2005.

Ayson worked as shift manager while Agustin, Capuz, Dedicatoria and Dalisay were pit managers until CRHAC terminated their services in July last year due to "loss of trust" following the so-called Scarboro Shoal incident.

They allegedly failed to prevent a card dealer, Arnaldo Agustin, from supposedly pocketing at the cards and recording the sequence on June 5, 2007.

Saying that CRHAC failed to give evidence of their alleged participation in the supposed illegal acts of Agustin, the six workers demanded reinstatement, P1 million each to cover moral damages, P1 million each in moral damages, back wages and attorney's fees.

NLRC Arbiter Reynaldo Alcon has yet to resolve the case.

On Jan. 21, the workers filed a joint counter-affidavit at the Department of Justice in Manila to deny conspiracy with Agustin.

This came after Senior State Prosecutor Roberto Lao sent the syndicated estafa case to the office of the chief state prosecutor from its original venue, the prosecutor's office in Angeles City.

Lao also admitted CRHAC's amended complaint that included the six workers in the estafa case. The original complaint, filed five months before the cases transferred to the DOJ in Manila in December last year, used only Arnabel Agustin and Manny Fernandez, casino players.

The workers claimed "no actual and direct participation" in what Arnabel Agustin allegedly committed, getting as well as reports from the surveillance department through which they could have prevented the alleged violations. Ayson was on leave when the incident happened.

CRHAC claimed it discovered a "wealth of evidence" against the workers. They challenged the Feb. 10 show cause hearings as unfair forms of evidence. None has been furnished the NLRC, though.

CRHAC brought the case to the SOJ after Agustin's lawyer asked the Angeles prosecutor to withhold from the media the Scarboro Shoal legal blue for the company.

The city council conducted an inquiry into the alleged discrimination and maltreatment of Filipino employees by CRHAC president and chief executive officer Roger Silverwood.

Westwood, according to the council resolution, banned Chinese employees over Filipinos. He also allegedly threatened personnel on guns.

Arlene de Guzman, CRHAC public relations officer, denied the allegations against Silverwood, describing him to be a "soft-spoken person."

The six workers said it was important for them to regain their jobs because they believed that they had been "blacklisted" by gaming firms in Macau.

"We committed no wrong. They removed our clothes to humiliate us," Capuz said.

Rosetta Orense, Inquirer Central Luzon

DAVAO CITY

World Bank allots $7M in grant for 11 towns

THE WORLD Bank's Global Environmental Facility (GEF) has earmarked at least $7 million in grant to 11 Mindanao towns.

The GEF helps developing countries fund programs and projects on the environment.

Jared Bellona, deputy program director of the City Agriculture Agriculture in Southern Mindanao, said among the projects that would be financed through the grant were those that would provide many from environmentally destructive forms of livelihood and provide them with alternative sources of income.

Dennis Jay Santos
Inquirer Mindanao

DUMAGUETE CITY

Negros Oriental forms global warming council

NEGROS ORIENTAL government has taken steps to reduce global warming.

Gov. Emilio Macias Teves Jr. created, which he chairs, had been created to formulate policies and plans designed to address global warming.

The Negros Region provinces will hold a summit on climate change and south

Kenny C. Armamento
Inquirer Visayas

MAGUINDANAO

Comelec settles poll case in Maguindanao

THE COMMISSION on Elections has finally resolved the mayoral controversy involving close to 50 political clans in Pagalungan, Maguindanao.

Datu Saudi Ampatuan, former Maguindanao governor and accredited Pagalungan vice mayor Ipatan has ruled the mayor, made proclaimed mayor of Pagalungan.

The Comelec provided the proclamation of Ollito Mastura, son of former Pagalungan Mayor Djongki Mastura.

Edwin Q. Fernandez and Charlie C. Tulfo, Inquirer Mindanao

DAVAO DEL SUR

Farmers' group assails Army for 'Red tag'

A MILITANT farmers' group has accused the military of harassing its members.

The Compostela Farmers Association of Kilusaya (SAKA) told the lawyers that soldiers had been accusing its members of being communist rebels.

Sandy Sachosa, SAKA spokesperson, said the group sought the help of Mayor Nelson Galang for protection against the harassment by the soldiers. Galang, a former police officer, said he would discuss the farmers' complaints with the military.

Orlando Dioko, Inquirer Mindanao

CALAMBA CITY

Fishermen launch fluvial protest vs harassment

A FISHERMEN'S group in Batangas went on a fluvial protest yesterday, Tuesday.

The protest would take members on the Bakig-Igulibong-Bunggo-Pandalingan Fishing Ground, off the coast of Pamatawan, to Caleta to protest the construction of coastal areas into beach resorts and industrial sites.

The fishermen were also protesting harassment from government soldiers.

Tuesday's protest will be held in the cities of San Fernando in La Union; Laguna, Sorsogon; Cebu, Iloilo, Bacolod and General Santos.

Nitz Catherine Cellan
Inquirer Southern Luzon

ILOILO CITY

PTA chief's name removed from sidewalks

THE PHILIPPINE Tourism Authority has started removing the name of its general manager, Robert Dean Barbers, from roads named on sidewalks on Boracay Island following criticisms from residents.

So far, plans the PTA put the agency's website.

Basilio P. Bergos Jr.
Inquirer Visayas

RP, US military exercises meet no resistance in Clark, N. Ecija

By Tonette Orejas
Inquirer Central Luzon

CLARK FREEPORT—Unlike in Mindanao, joint military exercises by Philippine and American troops in Clark and in Fort Magsaysay, Nueva Ecija, have not been hounded by protests from residents.

"There are no protests. We are fortunate. The people here are mindful and are not aggressive as those in their hometown," US Army Col. Ben Nura, public affairs officer of Task Force 364, a unit participating in the ongoing Balikatan exercises, said in a phone interview from Fort Magsaysay (see *Balikatan*).

The alleged participation of US troops in attacks and killings in a Mindanao village has stirred resistance among residents and religious leaders there.

At least 550 soldiers from the 1st Battalion of the 294th Infantry of the Guam National Guard, 2nd Battalion of the 200th Infantry Battalion of the New Mexico National Guard, and Charlie 3/5 Infantry in Alaska are participating in the training that began on Monday at the Army's largest camp.

Maj. Fernando Jose Banes, spokesperson of the Army's 7th Infantry Division, confirmed Nura's report. "We're not here to start protests," he said.

Troops from the same division and 69th Infantry Battalion of the 2nd IG based in Southern Tagalog are participating in marksmanship for M-4 rifles, sniping and combat life saving.

US troops in Fort Magsaysay are scheduled to donate books and athletic equipment to schools in Barangays Dalia Juan-Is and Soledad, and conduct dental services there.

8,000 soldiers

A total of 6,000 US troops and 2,000 Philippine soldiers are participating in this year's Balikatan (Shoulder-to-Shoulder) exercises in Bhubatan, Crow Valley in Tarlac, Clark, Fort Magsaysay, Subic and Zambales.

In Clark, 500 pilots from the US Marines, Air Force and Army have begun training with 350 Filipino counterparts in the 710th Strike Wing, Air Defense Wing, 220th Helicopter Wing and Combat Support Wing, Air Force, according to Lt. Col. Allan Ballesteros, Philippine Air Force spokesperson in Clark.

The training, called Combined Air Force Event, began on Tuesday.

Balikatan, the biggest of 20 or so exercises held annually between the two armed forces, is slated to end on March 5.

PASSING SCENE
A boy scavenging for recyclable materials observes as military leaders have a replika of a US flag and President Macapagal-Arroyo's effigy at a protest rally in Davao City against Balikatan exercises in Mindanao.

High production costs seen cause of poor farm yield

CLARK FIELD, PAMPANGA—IF THE GOVernment is serious in its bid to attain food security and reduce poverty, farmers said it must overcome security issues and other high farm production cost, lack of government support and limited access to credit.

Local officials and private sector stakeholders echoed the farmers' concerns in a food summit workshop here on Tuesday that the three problems remained to be the stone lining blocks to sustain food production.

They could also hamper the goal of making the country's agriculture globally competitive, they said.

Their stand outnumbered the issues and concerns they hated before Department of Agriculture officials tasked to lead the workshop, the first of a series of nationwide consultations on food security on matter to a national food summit in April.

The workshop drew 120 farmers, group farmer associations, producers and local government officials from the Bicol, Cagayan, Cordillera and Central Luzon.

Federal Gov. Nestle Blando, now a 2010 Nacionalista Party candidate for governor in Pampanga, said the country has to no improvement like woes of the agriculture sector on high production cost.

Farm inputs, such as fertilizers and fuel, were mostly, he said. For instance, he said, the Triple 16 was being sold at P1,000 per bag while diesel fuel to run water pumps was being sold at P56.50 per liter.

"One would need 40 liters of fuel per hectare. Irrigation is needed at least three per hectare and you would imagine the staggering fuel cost," Blando said.

The land preparation is another woe's he said. A plow harrow is hired at P1,200 to prepare the land for farming.

Noel Slade, agricultural of Bataan Mr. Pinatuar, said a hectare of the plants also need, oil four bags of urea, which is sold at P1,020 per bag, farmers find the price exorbitant, he said.

A liter of farm chemicals could range from P500 to P700 a liter, he said. Jhelmar Cardoz, Inquirer Northern Luzon

Schools performing poorly in tests warned of closure

GENERAL SANTOS CITY—EDUCATION Secretary Jesli Lapus on Sunday threatened to shut down public elementary and secondary schools that would get an average of 74 percent or below during the next National Achievement Test (NAT).

Speaking at the National Secondary Press Conference (NSPC) held in Koronadal City in South Cotabato, Lapus said that during the previous NAT, around 2,000 out of the 40,000 public schools nationwide failed to register a favorable average.

The results of last year's NAT prompted some sectors to question the system of education in the country. The dismal results of the tests threatened a poor many, Lapus said.

He said the Department of Education had adopted several measures aimed at helping students get higher ratings during the next exams.

Although the education secretary did not specify what those measures were, he said special attention was being given to the 2,000 schools that fared poorly in the exams.

Agustin Zenon, Inquirer Mindanao

Cell phone rings bring court fines, laughter

By Nestor P. Burgos Jr.
Inquirer Visayas

ILOILO CITY—FORGETTING to turn off their cellular phones or put them in silent mode while attending a court hearing, a provincial board member and his driver had to shell out P200 each to pay a fine imposed by the judge.

Board Member Art Rojas paid the fine on Tuesday after his cell phone rang during a hearing at the Iloilo Regional Trial Court Branch 66 in Barotac Viejo town, 64.4 kilometers south of here.

Rojas was attending a case management hearing on a petition for a temporary restraining order against the 2010 budget of the provincial government when his cell phone unexpectedly rang shortly after the hearing started at around 9 a.m.

The ringing interrupted Judge Danilo Arinday who promptly reprimanded Rojas for not observing court rules that all phones be turned off or put in silent mode during hearings.

Arinday initially ordered Rojas to pay a P500 fine. The board member apologized and asked the judge to lower the fine to P200, which the judge approved.

After the interruption, Arinday resumed presiding over the deliberations, but shortly before the hearing ended last week another cell phone rang, startling the crowd.

While Arinday checked the source of the noise, a man hurriedly left the courtroom, prompting the judge to summon him back. When the judge asked who the owner of the cell phone was, the said special attention was being given to the 2,000 schools that fared poorly in the exams.

Rojas' driver turned out to be the driver of Rojas, eliciting laughter from lawyers and officers present in the courtroom.

Arinday was not amused. He reprimanded Galopo and ordered him to pay a P200 fine.

2 Chinese visitors barred for hitting immigration man

A CHINESE NATIONAL AND HIS TEENAGE son have been banned from entering the country for slapping and then berating a lady immigration officer at the Ninoy Aquino International Airport (NAIA).

Immigration Commissioner Marcelino Libanan yesterday said he has issued an order placing 41-year-old Jiong Jie and his son on the Immigration blacklist.

Libanan stressed that foreigners like the Jiongs do not deserve to stay in the country.

"Jiong and his son insulted not only a woman but a Philippine immigration officer in urban Instagram mun show respect and courtesy befitting of her job in a gate-keeper of the country," Libanan said in a statement.

"Although the Philippines most always keep its doors open to tourists, foreigners should not abuse the country's hospitality by berating the constabulary and attacking the dignity of their Filipino hosts," he added.

The blacklist order stemmed from an incident that took place at the airport last Feb. 14 when Jiong and his son were questioning for clearance at the departure counter manned by Lorel Manrique.

Manrique reported in a written complaint that the elder Jiong, without any reason or provocation, suddenly exploded toward her and slapped her upper right arm.

Manrique said Jiong hit her so hard that she sustained a black mark on her arm.

The foreigner also shouted to Chinese and pointed his fingers at the immigration officer.

Manrique then told the departing passenger to go back to his line but his son, who would speak English, angrily told her that she was only a woman and she was being impolite to his father.

This prompted Manrique to call the attention of her duty supervisor, who then sought the help of airport policemen in pacifying the two foreigners. Maryjane C. Ortiz

Gaia Pasamba; 2

GAIA PASAMBA, 2, DAUGHTER OF Glenda and Chieb Dasamba, died on Feb. 18 due to a lingering illness. Her ashes are interred in Fatima Chapel, Pomerania Pax, Sucat Parañaque. Memorial services will be in the morning of Saturday. In lieu of flowers, contributions to Gaia Dasamba's medical fund for St. Luke's Medical Center are preferred by the family.

THE DAILY GOSPEL

Thursday, February 21, 2008
2nd Week of Lent
Peter Damian

1st Reading Jer 17:5-10
Gospel Lk 16:19-31

Jesus said to his disciples, "Once there was a rich man who dressed in purple and fine linen and feasted every day. At his gate lay Lazarus, a poor man covered with sores, who longed to eat just the scraps falling from the rich man's table. Even dogs used to come and lick his sores. In time the poor man died and angels carried him to take his place with Abraham. The rich man also died and was buried. From hell where he was in torment, he looked up and saw Abraham afar off, and with him Lazarus at rest.

He called out, 'Father Abraham, have pity on me and send Lazarus with the tip of his finger dipped in water to cool my tongue. For I suffer in anguish in this fire.'

Abraham replied, 'My son, remember that in your lifetime you were well-off while the lot of Lazarus was misfortune. Now he is in comfort and you are in agony. But that is not all. Between your place and ours a great chasm has been fixed, so that no one can cross even if travelers to you or from your side were to.'

The rich man implored once more: 'Then I beg you, Father Abraham, to send Lazarus to my father's house where my five brothers live. Let him warn them so that they may not end up in this place of torment.' Abraham replied: 'They have Moses and the prophets; let them listen to them.' But the rich man said: 'No, Father Abraham, but if someone from the dead goes to them, they will repent.'

Abraham said: 'If they will not listen to Moses and the prophets, they will not be convinced even if someone rises from the dead.'"

Commentary

The sin of the rich man was not that he was rich. He can make this kind of comment for the poor man who lived just outside the rich man's home day after day. He disregarded the needs of the poor man, finding it far much trouble to offer even the smallest bed or from his table.

The Scriptures make today have eternal consequences, as they tell man really learned. Every day we have opportunities to be generous to the challenge of our time, and to help others, but few decisions than ourselves. Do not neglect these opportunities that this day presents.

2008 budget up for signing by Senate, GMA

By TJ Burgonio

THE GOVERNMENT WILL FINALLY be operating on a new budget in the next two weeks.

The House of Representatives yesterday transmitted the P1.2267 trillion budget measure to the Senate for its approval, paving the way for its eventual signing by President Macapagal-Arroyo.

A beaming Speaker Prospero Nograles signed the 2008 General Appropriations Act, which was P500 million less than the President's original budget proposal, before he transmitted it to the upper chamber for signing by Senate President Manuel Villar Jr.

The President had submitted a P1.2270-trillion national expenditure program to Congress.

"Hopefully, on or before the end of the month or the first week of March, we will have the signing of the new budget by the President," Albay Rep. Edcel Lagman, chair of the House committee on appropriations, said.

The budget measure consists of P982,686 billion in new programmed allocations; P133.730 billion in Internal Revenue Allotment, and P61.182 billion in automatic appropriations.

Lagman said the bulk of the P500-million cut was taken from debt service payments and realigned to basic services and infrastructure development.

'Momentum of growth'

"We are addressing very seriously with great priority the delivery of basic social services and infrastructure development. This will give fresh to the message of the President... in sustaining the momentum of growth," he said in a briefing.

For the first time in a decade, the debt service fund was slashed to provide a bigger allocation for health, education, agriculture, social welfare, infrastructure, local government and development, judiciary, labor, energy, environment, public order, among others, officials said.

The Financial assistance to local government units and the priority development assistance fund (PDAF), popularly known as "pork barrel," was pegged at P1.352 billion.

As expected, the Department of Education got the lion's share of the budget, followed by the departments of public works, defense, local government, agriculture and transportation.

Deped was allotted P154.029 billion, broken down into P1.204 for basic education, and P1.505 billion for higher education.

Interestingly, the budget now included an allocation of P250 million for mid-term elections.

'Energizing cities'

"The electrification program of the government will now go from the center of the barangay to the cities. There have been so much clamor for cities to be energized. This budget will answer that clamor," Lagman said.

Both chambers of Congress also allotted an additional P400 million for the anti-tuberculosis campaign in the health department's P5.790 billion budget.

"We have placed P400 million additional for anti-TB under the Department of Health, and P200 million in the Department of Education in order to treat teachers and non-teaching personnel in government public schools who are affected with TB in so as not to contaminate students," Lagman said.

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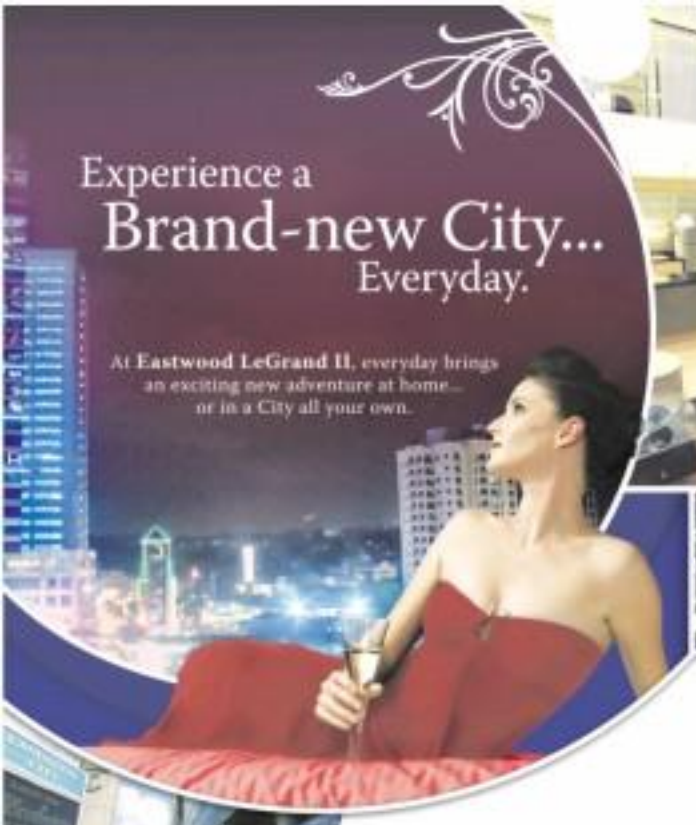

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Edu Bart C. Dyangit

DID YOU KNOW

TODAY Feb. 21 is the 116th birth anniversary of Iñda Pancracion Abalos, a prominent 19th-century painter from Binondo, Manila. One of his most famous works, "Christian Virgins Exposed to the Risk," won a silver medal at the 1980 World Exposition of Fine Arts. His work was used by Filipino propagandists as a symbol of the Spaniards' colonialism of the Philippines. Abalos died in Manila. He was in Barcelona, Spain. A street in Caloocan, Manila, was named after him. (DYC, Research, Inquirer Research)

GO FLY A KITE
These mustang-n-rides stair childhood into flying days: can do so at Rizal Park in Manila where they can buy a kite for P90-tech. (DYC)

Lawyer's wife shot dead in QC

By Marlon Ramos

A LAWYER'S WIFE WAS SHOT DEAD IN front of their house in Quezon City shortly after she brought her husband to the court-house yesterday.

Margie Castro, 42, succumbed to three gunshot wounds in the body while she was rushed to the East Avenue Medical Center.

The incident happened one day after lawyer Redenderon Villanueva survived an attempt on his life while he was walking in his office on Timog Avenue, also in Quezon City.

Supt. Rogelio Cabrera, Quezon City Police District Station 10 commander, said Castro was about to park her car in the garage of their house on Mahinlay Street, Barangay Central at 8:45 a.m. when two unidentified men suddenly appeared and shot her several times.

When the car came to a stop, the assailants opened the door on the driver's side and shot the victim once more at close range.

The two men then quickly boarded a still unidentified vehicle and escaped. Police recovered spent shells for .45-caliber pistol on the crime scene.

The victim's husband, lawyer Manuel Castro, told police investigators that his wife did not have enemies and never received any death threats before the incident.

"We believe the killers were after the victim's husband. The gunmen probably thought it was Attorney Castro who was inside the car," Cabrera told the locators.

He said the victim's husband owned the car and that she only used it. He, meanwhile, said that just days before her husband as the Quezon City Hall of Justice to attend a court hearing.

Cabrera said they were still investigating if the attack was related to the slay on on Villanueva who was shot seven times, but survived.

The police official said they are looking at the possibility that the attack could have something do to with the cases the lawyer was handling.

Dump fee suspended

Rodriguez town gives MMDA one month to find new sites for Metro Manila garbage

By Kristine L. Alave

THE TOWN GOVERNMENT OF Rodriguez, Rizal province, site of the landfills that accommodate trash from Metro Manila has temporarily cancelled the "pay as you discharge" scheme requiring each garbage truck using the dumps to pay on the spot about P1,000 in hauling fees and levies.

Suspended Mayor Pedro Cuenco said he canceled to temporarily halt the implementation of the payment scheme which took effect last Feb. 11 following his dialogue with Interior Secretary Ronaldo Puno the other day.

Puno, the mayor said, told him to wait until the case which the Metropolitan Manila Development Authority had filed against the town government is settled.

The MMDA earlier asked a Makati court to decide who between the Rizal provincial government and Cuenco had the legal authority to operate the landfills in the town. Pending the resolution of the case, the agency decided to stop remitting to the Rodriguez government payments made by Metro mayors for the use of the landfills.

The MMDA also filed a complaint against Cuenco after he decided to raise garbage levies last year, prompting Rizal Gov. Casimiro Ynares III to place him under preventive suspension for 60 days starting Feb. 12.

The MMDA and the provincial government said the increase in garbage fees was illegal. Metro Manila mayors also appointed to the town government in backtrack on the new payments scheme, saying it was redundant and that they could not afford it.

Issuing their dialogue, Puno directed upon Cuenco to open the road leading to the two landfills—one controlled by the town, the other supported by the provincial government—to allow the garbage haulers to use the dumps.

"Secretary Puno told us that it was all right for us to withdraw hauling the dumps but we should give the MMDA enough time to find alternative sites," Cuenco said in a phone interview.

Cuenco said they are considering giving the MMDA a month to find new dumping grounds for trash and reiterated their position that the town has full control of the landfill in the area.

Sweep her off her feet.

Check out the FLORIST section of the

DPC YELLOW PAGES

PRINT • INTERNET • MOBILE

Joshua needs your help

JOSHUA "JOSH" LUZ, AN 8-YEAR-OLD boy from Barotac City, was diagnosed with leukemia in 2005.

Since then, he has been undergoing treatment at the Dr. Jose Rizal Memorial Children's Medical Center on Banawe Street, Quezon City, with his mother, Rowena, keeping him company.

Josh's father, a hospital security guard, has chosen to remain in Barotac City to look after his other children.

Despite suffering these relapses, the boy has never lost his faith in God and told his parents he would keep on fighting.

Those who want to help Josh can call his mother, Rowena (346-12-301-0029-3 [DPAT]), or his doctor, Dr. Mariano (740-5496). Donations may also be entered through Kids2 Foundation. Please call Jose Bautista or Irene at 532-8907 or 7-998-873.

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Five-year antipoverty program launched in Pasay City

By Julie M. Aurelio

OVER 1,500 POOR families in Pasay City are expected to benefit from the national government's 5-year program that aims to help fight malnutrition and reduce the dropout rate among children of school age.

The program, "Bilyon Para Bayong Pilipino" was launched earlier this week by the Department of Social Welfare and Development—the agency tasked to implement the program—and the Pasay City government.

"This is a program on a random poverty, especially for children so they won't have to drop out from school because of poor health and lack of money for school," said Social Welfare Secretary Esperanza Cabral.

Last year, the city's social welfare office screened and found 675 families eligible for the program. "But we are aiming for 1,500 families as targets," said Pasay social welfare officer in charge Rosy Cruz.

The beneficiaries will come from the city's poorest areas that include barangays 13, 88, 89, 1 and 14.

Under the program, each beneficiary family will be given a cash grant of P500 a month or P6,000 a year for nutrients and health checkups.

Children ages 0 to 14 years old in the beneficiary family will also receive P300 for 10 months or P3,000 yearly for their school needs. Only three children per household, however, will be entitled to the cash gift.

Beneficiaries will be issued automated teller machine cards from which they can withdraw the cash grants from the Landbank of the Philippines.

"Our is to help bring down the high dropout rates and improve the low completion of primary education in our country," said of course, the problem of malnutrition in children," Cabral said.

The program will first be implemented in Pasay and Caloocan cities but it is expected to cover the entire Metro Manila area, and eventually go nationwide.

Cabral said the national government has set aside P5 billion this year for the program's nationwide implementation.

"We are planning to help at least 800,000 families nationwide for the five years that this will be implemented," she added.

Other government agencies involved in the program are the Department of the Health, Education and the Interior and Local Government and the National Anti-Poverty Commission.

MetroBriefs

Monthly pension for retired MPD members

MORE roses for retired Manila policemen. Manila Mayor Alfredo Lim yesterday announced that members of the defunct Manila Police Department would soon be given a P2,000 monthly pension by the city government. Lim, a former MPD member, said this was his way of paying tribute to former policemen. The city government will appropriate P12 million for the monthly pensions, he said, adding that the move was supported by an ordinance enacted by the City Council.

Tina C. Santos

Pasig court sides with advocacy group

A RTC judge has allowed an advocacy group to intervene in the case against the Philippine National Construction Corp.'s South Luzon Expressway-SLEX toll case. Judge Lois Tungor of the Pasig Regional Trial Court recently denied a motion to dismiss filed by PNCC against The Young Professionals and Entrepreneurs of San Pedro, Laguna (YPES). The PNCC earlier said the group had no legal personality and standing to file the case after the YPES asked the court to stop the agency from collecting toll at the SLEX because its 30-year franchise to operate ended in May 2007. But the PNCC said it can operate the toll way because it received a Toll Operations Certificate from the Toll Regulatory Board. Tungor, meanwhile, sided with the YPES, saying they are taxpayers who have a stake in the case.

Gilbert C. Perez

3 men nabbed for selling fake shampoo brands

THREE men were arrested the other day for selling fake shampoo in a businessman in Tondo, Manila. Members of the District Special Project Unit nabbed Alex Diaz, Raul Rodriguez and Jayson Ilanes who introduced themselves to Griselda Bautista as employees of Unilever Philippines. They then offered her several bottles of different shampoo brands at P1,000 from the suspects but became suspicious when her customers complained about the inferior quality of the shampoo she was selling. She asked for help from the police who set up an entrapment operation that led to the three men's arrest.

Allison M. Lopez

St. Scholastica's College Batch '84 goes retro

ST. SCHOLASTICA'S College Manila's High School Batch '84 will bring back the '80s via "Retro Ball" a post Valentine dinner show featuring "The Side A Band," the band's very own Judith Basa and Mimi Faustino with the Pasaysikat Band on Feb. 29, 7 p.m. at the 11th and Bar, Km 16, South Superhighway, Parañaque City for the benefit of the Division Old-timers Foundation. Tickets are priced at P1,200, inclusive of dinner, and are available at any Cafe Breton branch and at the gate on certain nights. For more information, please call 0917-5314188 or 0921-8873329.

Republic of the Philippines
Supreme Court
Manila

Bids and Awards Committee for Consultancy Services

INVITATION TO APPLY FOR ELIGIBILITY AND TO BID FOR CONSULTANCY SERVICES FOR THE REHABILITATION OF THE ELECTRICAL SYSTEM AND FIRE PROTECTION AND ALARM SYSTEM IN THE SUPREME COURT BUILDINGS

The Supreme Court of the Philippines, through its Bids and Awards Committee for Consultancy Services (BACCS), intends to engage the services of a Consultant to undertake the Detailed Engineering Design for the Rehabilitation of the Electrical System and Fire Protection and Alarm System in the Supreme Court Buildings through open competitive bidding.

The following are the relevant information on the Project:

Name of Project	: Detailed Architectural and Engineering Design for the Rehabilitation of Electrical System and Fire Protection and Alarm System in the Supreme Court Buildings
Approved Budget for the Contract	: P3,500,000.00 (Design Consultancy Fee)
Source of Funding	: Judiciary Development Fund
Contract Duration	: Four (4) months (Design Development Phase) Two (2) months (Construction Monitoring)

Interested consultants should signify their interest by submitting a Letter of Intent and one (1) set each of duly notarized Eligibility Documents to the Bids and Awards Committee for Consultancy Services c/o Office of the Chief Attorney, 5th floor of the Supreme Court Centennial Building, Padre Faura Street, Manila on 4:00 p.m. on or before March 6, 2008. Eligibility forms and Terms of Reference (TOR) shall be available for purchase at Php1,000.00 upon the submission of said Letter of Intent.

Eligibility requirements must be submitted in one (1) original and two (10) duplicate copies on or before March 11, 2008, 10:00 a.m. Only those who have been determined to be eligible and whose draft copies do not exceed the ABC shall be invited to submit their financial proposal and have a 30% weight. Additional details shall be available to shortlisted consultants on May 5, 2008.

Consultants must be interested, per duly schedule no earlier inspection at the secretariat office at the address indicated below by coordinating in advance with Engr. Bienvenido N. Bautista, SC Maintenance Division at telephone nos. 523-15-68 to 523-15-80.

All particulars relative to Eligibility Statement and Screening, Bid Security, Performance Security, Pre-Bidding Conference, Submission of Bids, Post-Qualification and Award of Contract shall be governed by the guidelines provisions of R.A. 9184 and its implementing Rules and Regulations (IRR).

The schedule of activities is as follows:

	Activities	Schedule
1.	Submission of Letter of Intent and Application for Eligibility	March 6, 2008 at 4:00 p.m.
2.	Submission of Eligibility Requirements & Financial Proposal for Eligibility Check	March 11, 2008 at 10:00 a.m.
3.	Pre-bid Conference	April 1, 2008 at 2:00 p.m.
4.	Submission and Opening of Bids	April 10, 2008 at 9:00 a.m.

The Supreme Court and the Philippine Government reserves the right to reject any and all bids and to comply with the requirements.

(Sgd.)
EDNA E. ONG
Chairperson

Manila kids join South African studies in peace workshop

By Tina C. Santos

ELEVEN-YEAR-OLD Rik Mamangun was jubilant when she was chosen as one of the participants in a peace workshop for children held at the Manila Pantheon in Rizal the other day.

But she was even more thrilled when she learned that the learning she made during the workshop, that of the Philippine flag, would be shown to students in South Africa.

"I hope they like it," she said.

Underneath the flag was a special lesson which Mamangun said her teacher had taught her. It had "No Advice," it read.

"If you want to be loved by everybody, be good and just to everyone.

Don't be cruel, don't be unkind, but try to live with an open heart."

Other children at the workshop also drew flags, including Cedrych Mhar, 11, who said he was nervous when he learned his artwork would be shown in South Africa.

"They might not find it nice," he said shyly. "I drew a flag and peace symbol and used each color means. I hope they learn something from it."

Mamangun and her classmates also viewed the drawings of South African students which conveyed their sentiments about peace.

The workshop, conducted by South African Fred Thomas Van der Walt and dubbed the "Global Twins Exchange," is a project which teams up schools in South Africa with those in the Philippines and allows students to exchange written and visual information about their country and culture.

Two hundred Filipino children ages 7 to 12 from public schools and welfare centers in Manila participated in the workshop.

"Through this project, we hope Filipino children will understand themselves better and see similarities and differences with children from another country," said Van der Walt, who is expected to present a paper on the peace process.

The workshop at the Museo Pambata was a prelude to the upcoming First Asian Children's Museum Conference which will be held from 26 to 28 at the Manila Hotel. With the theme "Children's Museum as Bridges of Peace," the conference will bring together museum workers, educators, peace builders, parents, teachers, caregivers and policymakers.

"Peace can exist at so many levels: to the families, children can analyze how their identities are connected to that of their family members. From there to the community, the family they can move on to discovering their roles in the bigger families to which they belong —the community and the country," said Nina Lim Perez, Museo Pambata president.

Interested participants may apply at the Museo Pambata, Roxas Boulevard corner South Drive, Manila. Applications can also be downloaded at www.museopambata.org/scms. or e-mail info@museopambata.org.

Did Romy Neri ever say GMA was evil?

ON TARGET
Ramon Tulfo

CHAIRMAN ROMY NERI of the Commission on Higher Education never denies having said that his boss, President Gloria, was "evil" and that she had lost her moral authority to govern.

But Neri could have uttered that statement out of sheer expression.

Consider this: The government was planning to construct a railway system for soldiers, policemen and civilians who would be affected by the rehabilitation of the Metropolitan Railway Transit (MRT).

Another train up for bids was the rehabilitation of the Light Rail Transit, the source of possible traffic of Metro Manila and its environs of Central Luzon.

The estimated cost was $3 billion (P120 billion in the MRT.

The money would come from loans from China. On April 16, 2007, Neri, then the Secretary General of the National Economic and Development Authority (NEDA), met with Chinese Ambassador Li Jiaxin and Trade Minister Bo Xilai to announce the requested loans.

The request was in connection with the forthcoming signing, on April 29, 2007, on the sidelines of the Asian conference between Manila officials in economic and businessmen in Boston.

On April 19, Neri flew to the south. GMA, from pushing through with the P35 billion loan because the economy had no capacity to repay it and would blunting government expenses.

The President, as a result, reportedly ordered Neri to remove portions of the banning loans for policemen and soldiers, and portions of the Angat loan.

That way, the government was able to remove $345 million worth of projects from the Hainan signing.

That paved the way for the P35B million loan for the ZTE NBN project, of which $200 million would have been used for facilities.

GMA is said to have scorched the earth by loan for policemen and soldiers and part of the loan to improve the water system of Metro Manila allegedly to enable her family and friends to get the P300 million.

+++

The Presidential Anti-Smuggling Task Force (PASG), one of the few remaining trustees the agency is in the hands of administrators is under the from a presidential ally.

SBMA political ally wants the agency disbanded for going after smugglers at the Subic freeport.

Yeni Rad Enterprises Antonio Millar, PASG chief, insists **He even insists the President's** ally to have him removed.

It's only Villar who can reportedly turn down requests from Mike Arroyo, the President's husband, who allegedly wanted the PASG chief to go "easy" on some smuggler friends.

"I didn't seek this job in the first place," Villar said. Modesty!

+++

A prominent family whose members are mostly politicians, is very much worried over the state of health of its male clan.

But of the worry is due not so much in the possibility that he might leave them soon but due to the family wealth has been entrusted to his spendthrift(sic) wife whom he has two children.

When he was very sick some months ago, the other family members had a conference where they decided to talk to the wife about as well.

Now that he's up and about, nobody in the family has the courage to bring up the topic of getting back the wealth from the "other woman."

The fate of the bank of the spendthrift is reportedly in the billions.

+++

In Palauran, would you believe it?, Joel Reyes is allegedly being bullied in his own backyard by the forces of two opposing campaigns whose the local government canal last November for mineral duty?

The world is now upside down. It used to be that the powers-that-be would do the harassing.

The boss of the mining firm has reportedly been dropping the names of Environment Secretary Lito Atienza and Justice Secretary Raul Gonzalez.

DBP
Development Bank of the Philippines

INVITATION TO PRE-QUALIFY AND TO BID

The Development Bank of the Philippines ("DBP"), through its Pre-qualification, Bids and Awards Committee ("PBAC"), hereby issues this invitation to interested parties to apply for pre-qualification and to bid for the purchase and assignment of DBP's rights, title, interest and obligations on Assets included in a Portfolio of Non-Performing Assets with total Gross Book Value ("GBV") of approximately Philippine Pesos One Billion Eight Hundred Million (PhP1,800,000,000.00), (inc. "Related Bid Public Auction of Non-Performing Assets", or the "Transaction").

The Portfolio of Non-Performing Assets will be sold through a sealed bid public auction process. All interested parties may inquire, inspect, and obtain the detailed Bidding Guidelines, Book 1, Terms of Reference for Pre-qualification and Pre-qualification Documents starting February 21, 2008 from 8:00 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. from and at the following address:

THE SECRETARIAT, PRE-QUALIFICATION, BIDS AND AWARDS COMMITTEE
Special Bid Public Auction of DBP's Portfolio of Non-Performing Assets
c/o Asset Management Department, Ground Floor, DBP Building
Development Bank of the Philippines, Sen. Gil Puyat Avenue corner Makati Avenue
Makati City, Philippines 1200
Telephone no. +632 890 4914 and +632 818 5511 local 2141/2144
Facsimile E-mail: bidassist@developmentbank.com.ph

Interested parties are required to submit themselves to the pre-qualification process by submitting the required Pre-qualification Documents specified in the aforementioned Terms of Reference for Pre-qualification that lists the pre-qualification criteria. The PBAC will notify each interested Party, on the result of the evaluation of the Pre-qualification Documents. Each Interested Party that passed the evaluation shall have the non-refundable Bidding Documents Purchase Price of Philippine Pesos One Thousand Pesos (PhP1,000.00) and is required to complete its pre-qualification criteria. A Pre-qualified Bidder may subsequently be disqualified to participate in the Transaction should there be any material and/or intentional misstatement of information in the Pre-qualification Documents submitted to DBP.

The Bidder Registration Cut-Off Date is on March 14, 2008. DBP, or its sole and absolute discretion, reserves the right to accept or decline pre-qualification documents received from any interested party after said date. Kindly note that pre-qualification documents submitted after the start of the Investor Due Diligence Period, March 3, 2008, or Bidder Registration Cut-Off Date, March 14, 2008 will delay the distribution of the Bid Documents and Schedule of Activities to the particular interested party. The Bidder Due Diligence Period ends on April 1, 2008 and the Bid Submission Date is April 2, 2008.

DBP ASSUMES NO OBLIGATION WHATSOEVER TO COMPENSATE OR INDEMNIFY ANY INTERESTED PARTY, PRE-QUALIFIED BIDDER OR WINNING BIDDER, AS THE CASE MAY BE, FOR ANY EXPENSE OR LOSS THAT SUCH PARTY/BIDDER MAY INCUR IN ITS PARTICIPATION IN THE PRE-QUALIFICATION AND BIDDING PROCESS.

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(Sgd.) ARMANDO D. SARIA
Executive Vice President and Chairman
Pre-qualification, Bids & Awards Committee

Burma bars Suu Kyi from 2010 polls

RANGOON—AUNG SAN SUU Kyi will not be allowed to run for election under Burma's military-drafted constitution, a spokesman said Thursday.

The junta says the elections—if approved—will close the door to Suu Kyi, who has been under house arrest for almost 13 of the past 18 years.

Nyan Win, spokesman for Suu Kyi's National League for Democracy (NLD) party, said a landslide victory in 1990 polls.

The junta never recognized the result and late Tuesday an state-run newspaper announced that a special commission had finished the final draft of the charter.

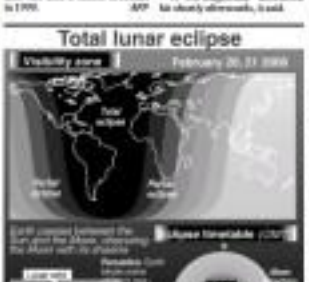
Foreign Minister Nyan Win told a regional gathering in Singapore that the document would ban Suu Kyi from her home meaning she would be unable to run for election.

Any party announced has to nominate "majors," saying the military appointed to be leading plans for the elections before lowering the curtains of the referendum.

"There is not just a law to govern the elections which are to be held in 2010. It's unjust for the authorities to talk in advance about the elections," NLD spokesperson Nyan Win told AFP.

Singapore Foreign Minister George Yeo said the Burmese counterpart had explicitly told a gathering of regional ministers that Aung San Suu Kyi would not be allowed to run because she married Michael Aris, a British citizen who died of cancer in Britain in 1999. AFP

Total lunar eclipse


Visibility zone
February 20, 21 2008
Total eclipse
Partial eclipse
Earth passes between the Sun and the Moon, obscuring the Moon with its shadow
Penumbra
Outer shadow
Umbra
Inner shadow
Sun
Moon
Earth's orbit
Earth
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Total eclipse
Partial eclipse
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The WORLD

Editor Lawrence B. Ibanez

Worldwide hopes, fears for post-Castro Cuba

WASHINGTON—THE UNITED STATES AND OTHER POWERS ON Tuesday hoped for democratic reforms in Cuba after Fidel Castro's decision to step down as president, while some leftist allies hailed his five decades of rule.

US President George W. Bush said Castro's successor should open the door for democratic reform on the communist island, but a top US diplomat said Washington's decades-old embargo was not likely to end soon.

The 81-year-old Cuban president, a thorn in Washington's side for almost half a century, said in a message published on Tuesday he would not seek the presidency again when it is decided later this month.

Bush echoed many Western leaders when he said the move should herald reform on the communist island. "It should be a beginning of the democratic transition for the people in Cuba," Bush said en route to Brussels.

In Washington more than 100 members of Congress urged the United States to review its policy of isolation toward Cuba, in a letter to Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice.

But Deputy Secretary of State John Negroponte cut short any speculation of an end to the US embargo, initially imposed in 1962, telling reporters: "I don't imagine that happening anytime soon."

Other opponents of the Cuban regime, rights defenders and Cuban dissidents abroad, were skeptical that Castro's move marked a brighter future, maybe fixing that he will name his younger brother.

"Even if Castro no longer calls the shots, the repressive machinery he constructed over almost half a century remains fully intact," said Jose Miguel Vivanco of US-based Human Rights Watch (HRW) in a statement.

London-based rights group Amnesty International called for the release of political prisoners and reforms to guarantee human rights.

The head of the Organization of American States (OAS) Jose Miguel Insulza, speaking to reporters in Mexico, called for change through "internal decisions of the Cuban people," rather than by outside interference.

In Moscow, the leader of Cuba's historic ally, Russia's Communist Party, hailed the move by Castro, who has been in exclusion for 19 months due to illness and has been temporarily replaced by his brother Raul.

"It's a brave decision and in taking it Fidel cuts bold Castro was guided by the interests of his country and his people," said Gennady Zyuganov, quoted by Interfax news agency.

Castro's ties with the Soviet Union took the world to the edge of nuclear war in the 1962 Cuban missile crisis, sparked when Moscow sought to position nuclear missiles on the island facing Florida.

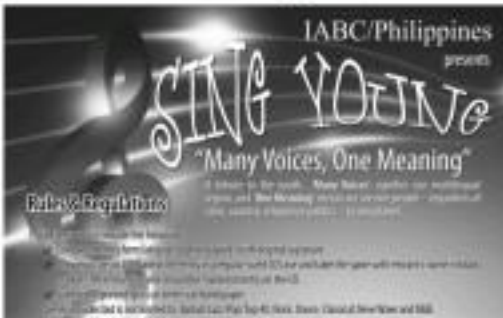
Two European anticommunist icons also stressed that Castro's decision to step aside should be the beginning of democratic reform on the island.

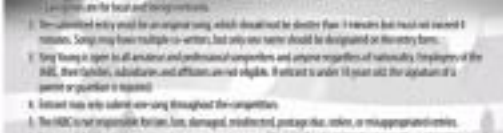
Ex-Czech Republic President Vaclav Havel said he hoped it "will be a first step toward democracy." But former Polish President Lech Walesa said communism was "still well in place" in Cuba.

Castro did not name a successor, but most analysts believe his 76-year-old brother Raul is the obvious choice.

Spain—Cuba's former colonial ruler—has been a key reform proponent with a greater capacity, impetus and confidence," said the minister for Latin American, Trinidad Jimenez. Italy's government also called for steps to democracy.

Some of the 27 EU member states, led by Spain which normalized its relations with Havana last year, are in favor of definitively dropping their sanctions on Cuba, which were introduced in 2003 but suspended two years later. AFP





Team makes gecko-inspired waterproof adhesive adhesive

GECKOS—SCIENTISTS HAVE LONG ADmired this gecko's brand for its gravity-defying feet. Now US researchers have made a waterproof bandage inspired by the sticky surface of a gecko's paws.

The finding, published on Monday in the journal Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences, could be used in the operating room or in products we use around the house.

"What we did was to mimic what the gecko does," Robert Langer, a professor at Massachusetts Institute of Technology said in a telephone interview.

Langer and colleague Jeff Karp of Harvard Medical School used computer technology to sculpt extremely tiny hills and valleys on the surface of the bandage to grip the underlying tissue, improving its adhesion.

The bandage is made of a hemihber material administered by Langer, Karp and others.

While different teams have created gecko-inspired glues that could be used to dry environments, the "secret sauce" to the bandage is its use in wet environments, such as in heart, bladder or lung tissue.

It is biodegradable, so it could be left inside the body.

"There is a big need for a tape-based medical adhesive," Karp said in a statement.

He said such adhesives must stick well when wet without causing undue inflammation or toxic effects. They also must be flexible.

To make it sticky on wet surfaces, Langer and Karp added a thin layer of a sugar-based glue to the tape. In tests on samples of pig intestines, the glue was twice as strong as adhesives with no pattern.

Langer said the bandage could be used to prevent leaks in gastric bypass surgeries or they could be used to augment sutures or staples.

"You could also put drugs in there and use them as drug or cell delivery mechanisms," he said. Reuters

Pakistan's Musharraf rejects opposition calls for him to quit

ISLAMABAD—PAKISTAN PRESIDENT Pervez Musharraf rejected calls to resign as opposition parties on Wednesday mounted a coalition government that could force the key US ally from power.

Nawaz Sharif, the ousted Musharraf removed from power in a coup in 1999, and the widow of assassinated former Premier Benazir Bhutto both said they wanted to work with other opposition groups after Monday's vote.

Sharif urged Musharraf to quit, while Bhutto's daughter said he would not work with anyone associated with the party that backed Musharraf in the last parliament, which observers said suffered a stinging defeat at the polls.

A statement from Bhutto's Pakistan People's Party (PPP) on Wednesday "recalled General Musharraf's recent statements that if the parties supporting him were defeated in the elections, then he would resign from his office." Despite the intensifying pressure on Musharraf, he told an American newspaper that he has no plans to quit.

Asked by the Wall Street Journal whether he would resign or retire, Musharraf said: "No, not yet. We have to move forward in a way that we bring about a stable democratic government to Pakistan." Musharraf was also quoted in the interview published on the newspaper's website as saying he would like to function "with any party avid any coalition because that is in the interest of Pakistan."

Sharif and Zardari were set to meet in Islamabad on Thursday. Both were also due to hold meetings of their party-related executive committees on Wednesday, with contacts between the two sides expected.

A firebrand lawyer detained by Musharraf since November, Aitzaz Ahsan, called for the president to resign on Tuesday.

Opinion polls before the election showed that up to three-quarters of Pakistanis questioned said it was time for him to go.

"He should quit," said Tabassum Sahra, 51, a state-selling medical supplies on a busy commercial street in the eastern city of Lahore. "If he does not quit, then everything will be useless—the elections, the change. We want change." Election commission secretary Kanwar Dilshad said the official results of the vote were set to be announced on Wednesday after the final handful of constituencies were tallied. AFP

WHAT'S INSIDE
An era ends in New Jersey /A23

SPORTS
Editor Teddyboy S. Melendres Assistant Editor Frances T.J. Ochoa

Pacquiao gunning for KO, says Roach /A24

Giants come alive, cut Realtors' lead

Simon, Yap fuel big 2nd-half surge to power Purefoods past Sta. Lucia

By Macong R. Castillo

RYAN GREGORIO SUMMED IT UP IN TWO SIMPLE words: "We're back."

Purefoods, a team given up for dead after a pair of fourth-quarter meltdowns, came alive in the final period of an ultra-physical Game Two for a 118-107 victory over Sta. Lucia last night in the Senate PBA Philippine Cup title series at the Araneta Coliseum.

The Realtors, who had a chance to erect a 2-0 commanding insurmountable 3-0 lead in the form of seven-point, fourth-quarter assault and rearchard their lead got trimmed to 2-1.

"The hardcore before this game was to survive and stay alive," Gregorio, the Purefoods coach, explained. "We showed great survival instinct tonight."

Purefoods showed more than just survival instincts. The Giants were on attack mode all night and instead of relinquishing into the physicality of Sta. Lucia's defense, decided to throw a few jabs and elbows of their own.

And for the first time in three games in the series, Gregorio approved of the way the game was officiated, even if there were several instances when things almost got out of hand because of rough play from both sides.

"I knew it all along, if they [referees] will just call it the right way, they [Realtors] will be in real trouble for most of the night," Gregorio said.

Rino Jose Simon came off the bench to toss in 26 points, 12 in the third period. In fact, but in the fourth-quarter explosion of Ten Giants was the firepower behind Purefoods for the third to keep the team afloat while its two main rods for hands—Jamie Yap to even ascribed by Purefoods to stone off a sixth foul.

A supposed-to-be-hurt Yap returned in the fourth period to key the Purefoods breakaway by scoring 12 of his 22 points.

"We'll lick our wounds tonight, prepare again starting tomorrow," said Sta. Lucia coach Robert Bernardo, who did not comment on the officiating.

Purefoods was whistled for 39 total fouls, while Sta. Lucia was called for 46, highlighting the physicality of the match. Several key Realtors left into foul trouble, including the back-court pair of Ryan Reyes and Dennis Miranda, who fouled out late in the match.

This time, the Giants did not back down from the physicality to one play in the third period, Rainel Alcabasa nearly decked Sta. Lucia's Joseph Yeo with a wayward elbow. Yap also dished out a hard foul on Yeo in the final 52.2 seconds and the game already in the bag for the Giants, drilling the Sta. Lucia reinforcement with a forearm to the head for his trouble.

It was a favor returned by the Purefoods gunslinger, who got hacked hard by Yeo in the preceding play.

The victory marked the first time in the tournament that the Giants, who clamored over their highest output of the conference and their biggest point total in a first-of-seven series game in 10 years, was against an opponent that scored more than 100 points.

Purefoods also played the tight defense that Kelly Williams last night, bounding the bowling Best Player of the Conference but nearly uncharacteristic.

Williams, the overwhelming choice of the covering media for the MVP plums, almost sees a string of 22 games in outs digits snapped, scoring his 10th point with a free throw in the final 2:51 off a Marc Pingris foul.

Scores:

PUREFOODS 118—J. Yap 22, Jones 19, Ilaya 18, R. Yap 16, Pingris 8, Salvador 6, Alcabasa 6, Castelo 6, Lastimosa 5, Chan 1, Lanete 1

STA. LUCIA 107—Reyes 22, Miranda 21, Williams 15, Aguilar 8, Poole 8, Chiongbian 5, Mendoza 5, Fernandez 3, Yeo 2, Belga 1, Cortez 0

Quarters: 25-30, 59-62, 80-85, 118-107

DEFENSE. Espino of Sta. Lucia gets hacked hard by Purefoods center Korby Raymundo as he barrels his way to the basket.

Harbour Centre crew loads up on firepower

By Romina S. Acosta

MORE BAD NEWS FOR THE OPPOSING TEAMS? Two-time Most Valuable Player (MVP) Jason Castro and Jonathan Fernandez are back to reinforce Harbour Centre's title contention bid in the Philippine Basketball League (PBL) Unity Cup which flies off on Saturday at Filoil Flying V Arena in San Juan City.

The duo from where Castro and Fernandez missed Batang Pier's record fourth PBL title in the 3-2 to Extreme Cup because of National Team duties but TY Tang and Solomon Mercado count them inside to for their absence.

Tang and Mercado joined forces in leading Harbour past Hapee YoungGuns in the season-ender at Game 3, as the Batang Pier clawed back from a 15-point deficit en route to the crown in overtime.

"It's a case of four heads are better than two," said team owner Bibot Simeon. "But seriously speaking, I think with the return of Jason and Jonathan, our backcourt has become more solid and more ready."

Four other National players are also part of Harbour's lineup—old-timers Jayjay Helps and Chad Alonzo and new acquisitions Jeff Chan and Beaze Ramirez.

Other members of the team are Ryan Madson, Chaney Taylor, Edwin Asoro, Al Wapani, Jervin Gana, Jonathan Fernandez, Gilbert Malabanan and Allan Escobron.

With such a talented cast, coach Jorge Gallent said nothing I believe in, to avoid it and to a daunting task.

"I have to tell the team is really our concern right now," said Gallent. "We've just started practicing beginning this month so we have yet to coalesce the collective our name."

Team manager Erick Arcegas, however, is entertained Gallent can take care of the team, especially after a team-building seminar last week to make the play on or ease with each other.

Tang, named finals MVP last season, agreed with his mentor, stressing it's also a player's responsibility to know his role in the team.

"I think the bottom line is we're all committed to winning," said Tang. "So you have to identify what roles you will have to play for the team."

The San Mig Coffee Kings will test the mettle of Batang Pier in the 4 p.m. main game.

THE HARBOUR Centre players, staff and management are all optimistic about the coming PBL tournament.

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INTERCLUB

Canlubang favored anew

By Ernest A. Gonzalez

SAN PABLO—CANLUBANG'S RECORDA-breaking machines in the Philippine Airlines Interclub golf tournament again burst in Mic-starting force in-manners with the famed Laguna course built by the Yulo family setting its eighth on a third straight Season-Men's championship double.

And the first half of Canlubang's men championship drive in the tournament's 41st edition started off in a blaze and with its honor team spearheaded by Tommy Manotoc rattled atop above the rest of the 23 squads in the premier division.

Based on the total team score the last five years, Canlubang has a leading average of 95 points against the 88 of Tonits, the runner-up the last two years and the fastest dominant team of old with 13 senior titles since the 55-and-above category was introduced in 1987.

"You've got the story of the senior tournament already right there," point-ed out tournament director Buddy Encarnacion.

And to make matters worse for the enemy, former Pasig City individual champion Dave Hernandez now had, since the season had of Canlubang, already will won by 15 points last year and the reigning champion of the Philippine Amateur for signing the winning scorecard.

"More than the record, we just want to win it all again. I think we have a pretty good chance at it," said Bally Wong, the golf manager of Canlubang, which joined the Senior division early in 2006 when to start from the Men's section finally became eligible for the elder bracket.

Luanto, which has added Pepot Elgar and Carlo Gamboa to a team built around Iggy Clarencillo, Richie Garcia and Francis Guerrero, actually needs to worry more of how to keep second place with four teams within striking distance of its point average.

Manila Golf Club, led by Alex Prieto and Rodney Ramirez, is ranked third with an 80.6 scoring norm. The Bacolod-Negros Golf Manila Southwoods is a fourth with 80.6 followed by defending champion Makati Golf and Country Club with 80.

While the tournament has been stretched to four days for the first time, the eight players to a team format has been retained with the 64 teams now battling four players each day with the top three to count. The top-six scores by players for 36 holes decide the team standings.

The change comes in a team relay-ing competition unlike in the past when the players have to finish their regular 36-hole schedules in three days.

PHILIPPINE Air lines president Jaime J. Bautista leads the ceremonial tee-off Wednesday to formally start the seniors' competition of the 41st PAL Interclub in Canlubang Golf and Country Club. At right is golfing legend Fredrik Wilmes.

All is well in Bong Alvarez's world

IN HUDDLE

Abelardo Cadiz

I WAS GLAD-pleased to get a phone call from Bong and Monina Alvarez while I was out cheering Valenzuela's eight-ball with neighbors and friends in Dasmariñas City.

It had been months, perhaps years, since I last heard from the couple and her mobile migrated to Amerika.

I have been hooked on the (mostly) drowsy noodle and drum talks going around basketball circles.

Needless to say most of those talks are unsavory, if not downright negative. They are saying, for example, that Bong has developed a bad and expensive habit, reserved only for the odd rest of his real-estate properties and expensive cars, including his huge, palatial home in Bong which has a swimming pool and a basketball court.

His colleagues say Bong has fallen over head in love and is now running a modest apartment in the same area and lives by himself. Dhay has left him, they said, taking with her their three lovely daughters.

Mitra has been a battered housewife of late, according to them.

Since Bong has a damaging tendency to misrepresent—and exaggerate, at times—talks, I chose to reserve judgment until I got the chance to talk with him and Mitra personally.

* * *

"Happy bidoubasol Bong and Mitra said over the phone, as they invited me to dinner at an expensive restaurant in Libis the following day.

Meanwhile, my mind was racing. If **reports were true that they had separated**, they must have reconciled before Valentine's Day. And are they really broke? If they are, how come they **can afford their old lifestyle, like dining in expensive restaurants? Sometimes the opposite don't live with the** facts.

I accepted the invitation, but suggested a place closer to home. Since I have a difficulty driving at night, I asked if they could pick me up.

"Are you betraying a con?" I asked. I had to be sure. Bong will load at least one vehicle left because the last time I saw him on the street, he was aboard a tricycle, where he fell asleep and the driver had to prop him up beside.

"Why is he riding a taxi?" I asked myself at the time. "What happened to his Ford Expedition, his late model Mercedes Benz with the special plate number, and his other cars?"

He had a garage big enough to accommodate half a dozen. If I remember correctly.

* * *

Bong was driving a gold Kia Carnival when he and Monina picked me up the following night. They had renamed this vehicle for family use, he said, explaining that the Benz was for the boys. A gas guzzler—had long been disposed of.

I took a long, good look at Monina, scanning her arms and other exposed body parts. I didn't see any blacks, blues, welts or any kind of bloodshed. Her skin was as flawless as ever.

They had just come from the gym for their regular workout, she said. "It's our form of bonding."

They certainly look healthy in the best of shape, and not for a boxing bout, as some of their colleagues had insinuated.

Bong and the whole family celebrated Valentine's Day together.

"Yes, you still staying in the same house?" I asked.

"Yes, we will only dispose of the house if and when we migrate to Australia," Bong replied.

At that point, I decided to tell Bong and Mitra a version of the confidence talks that have been going around.

* * *

He told me why he was a sibling a con and why he left college that night he got into trouble, and why one of his fellow students pitched him as a drug addict and a rabble-rouser.

Mitra was the first to stand up for him. "Even before, treasurer-ing underpaid ang trouble-kay Bong. Kahit mahilo ng bagay-bagay, hemahalo."

Bong and Monina are convinced that the only way they could find peace and maybe happiness is to get out of this country. The endless, the broken.

That night he was in a taxi, he had just played an out-of-town game which he organized.

"I was very, very tired that's why I fell asleep. I was driving a Ford Expedition without Mitray had to be rushed for an emergency. I didn't have time to pick up my car at the hospital and I hired a driver. I had parked it," Bong related.

SPORTSWATCH

Mighty Filter Kings win

MIGHTY CORPORATION COMPLEX DA-vao gamer sweeps of its season Mighty Filter Kings Northern Luzon final by downing JCI All-Star, 80-68, at the Cotton College gym in Baguio City. Randy Dita pioneered the Mighty Filter squad's big performance, scoring 19 points in the second half to erase 8-24 points. The win is part of Mighty Corporation's commitment to promote sports in the countryside. Last year, it also organized basketball and football tournaments in Bataan and Bacolod City, respectively.

Arches, 73

HAPHILITE MICHELSON ANGELS SE-quoia native Marion Barton dished 17 last Sunday afternoon at the Philippine General Hospital due to a lingering illness. He was survived by sisters Manuela and Lena, wife Thelma, children Rodney, Edd, Dindy, Jan, Gemma, Lary and Beverly, nephews, nieces and grandchildren. His remains lies at their residence in Barangay Bagong Monteritzan City. Interment will be announced later.

Religon sets Feb. 23 derby

AFTER SEEDED 10 PERFORMANCE, Religon Mega Cockpit unveils on Feb. 23 the 2nd Intinuder Ta Mega 8-cock derby with P1.5 million at stake. The affair the first big derby under Religon's new management, now headed by Joe Montalbo, Bey Gito and Rodel Sallo. Participants must submit entries on Feb. 22 from 9 a.m. to 10 p.m. and may contact 8112270, 8629872 and 633 6616. Religon also presents the Fastest Win One-Cock Derby tomorrow.

Las Piñas hosts 50 fights

UP AND COMING LOCAL BOXING SERIES GETS UNDER against each other in Las Piñas Gymnasium's special 5-card derby tonight, starting at 7 p.m. Fights include a 6-round bout between Jeffrey Pacquiao and Jerry Tomogan, a 4

Gasol makes victorious LA debut

Nuggets ruin Garnett return

LOS ANGELES — PAU GASOL AND KOBE BRYANT EACH SCORED 23 POINTS to lead the Los Angeles Lakers to their fifth straight victory, a 123-99 win against the Atlanta Hawks on Tuesday.

Lamar Odom dipped in 17 points and 15 rebounds for the Lakers, who have won eight of their last 10 National Basketball Association games.

The trade that brought Gasol from Memphis has already paid dividends with the Lakers improving to 6-1 overall since acquiring their new center.

Making his debut in Los Angeles, Gasol powered in 17 points in what proved to be the deciding scoring load.

Los Angeles went up by double digits in the first quarter and then opened up a 41 point lead after forcing the Hawks to 16 turnovers, which led to 27 points, in the first 24 minutes alone.

In Cleveland, The Houston Rockets survived early back-to-back winning steps after the All-Star break, beating the Cavaliers, 95-85, to earn their ninth straight win.

The win was also the ninth consecutive one's triumph for the Rockets, matching the Franchise's longest road winning streak.

Houston also had to overcome stiffs double from the Cavs' LeBron James.

"We don't want to get tired of winning," said Houston's Tracy McGrady, who scored 17 points. "That's our reason, wanting to keep it up.

"A lot of people probably thought the break was bad for us because we had so much momentum, so much swagger going into the break. But everybody came back focused and we said, 'Let's start it off right. Let's not get tired of winning.'"

They were together 26 points, 12 rebounds and 11 assists by James, who recorded his fifth triple double of the season and the 15th of his career.

"I missed too many shots that I usually make," said James, who came under pressure from a strong Houston defense.

Shane Battier had 13 points, six assists and five rebounds and Yao Ming posted 16 points and 14 rebounds for the Rockets, who are fighting for one of the final playoff spots in the Western Conference.

Houston began the night a shade out of the eighth and final playoff position.

The visit just 3-for-17 and McGrady-6-for-13 on their field goal attempts but the Rockets still managed the win.

"This was really a positive win for us," said Houston coach Rick Adelman. "We defended well the whole game."

In Denver, Carmelo Anthony scored 29 points, Allen Iverson added 28 and the Denver Nuggets spoiled the return of Kevin Garnett, holding on for a 116-114 victory over the Boston Celtics.

Denver also halted the Celtics' dominance over Western Conference teams this season, snapping their string of 14 straight wins.

Garnett, who had been out since Jan. 25 with a strained abdominal muscle, wasn't his flashy self, finishing with four points on 1-of-7 shooting in four to 21 minutes of action.

Magic, Pistons win

In Auburn Hills, Michigan, Rasheed Wallace scored 28 points, warren Keith Gaston added 19 and Orlando's 102-88 rout of Detroit ended the Pistons' 10-game winning streak.

In Washington, Zach Randolph had 24 points and 10 rebounds, Jamal Crawford added 21 points and New York broke a franchise record by scoring 22 points in overtime on the way to beating the Wizards, 123-100.

Three pointers from Sam Robinson and Quentin Richardson and a pair of dunks from David Lee at the start of the extra period helped the Knicks pull away. New York finished the team's total of 13 overtime points, set in a victory over Houston in 1966.

In Salt Lake City, Deron Williams had 29 points and 13 assists, and Utah overcame a shaky first quarter to complete a sweep of the season series against Golden State with a 119-109 victory.

In San Antonio, Manu Ginobili scored 19 points to lead San Antonio past Charlotte, 95-85, in its first home game in more than three weeks.

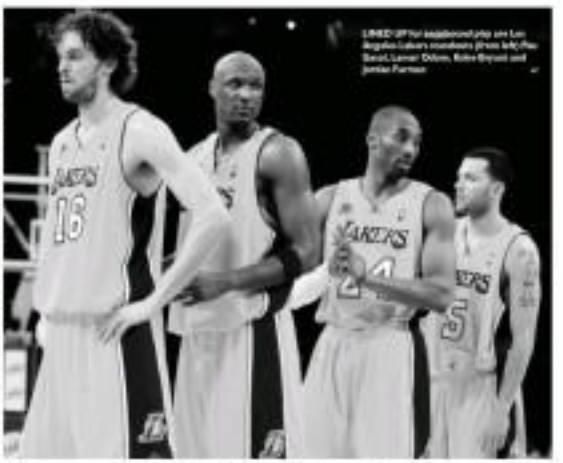
Timberwolves snap losing run

In Minneapolis, rookie Rachael McCants scored 20 points, Al Jefferson had 19 points and 14 rebounds, and Minnesota snapped a five game losing streak with a 104-88 victory over the Nets.

In Seattle, Toni Kukoc scored a season high 20 points for Seattle and Pedja Stojakovic had 16, including the go-ahead score with 21 seconds remaining as the SuperSonics stopped the Memphis Grizzlies, 108-101.

In Portland, Sacramento snapped a three-game losing streak by beating Portland, 101-94.

Reuters, AP/AP



LINED UP Pau Gasol (second, top row, Los Angeles Lakers members (from left) Paul Bryant, Lamar Odom, Kobe Bryant and Jordan Farmar.

An era ends in New Jersey

EAST RUTHERFORD, NEW JERSEY — The Jason Kidd era is over in New Jersey.

The New Jersey Nets and Dallas on Tuesday completed a trade sending the All-Star to the Mavericks, who now have one of the NBA's best point guards as they look toward the playoffs. This will be Kidd's second stint with Dallas.

The eight-player deal, in the making since before the All-Star break, sends Kidd, forward Malik Allen and guard Antoine Wright to Dallas for point guard Devin Harris, center DeSagana Diop and swingman Maurice Ager, plus rookie forward Kosta Koufos and Dallas' first-round draft picks and $3 million.

The Mavericks subsidized an after-noon news conference.

Vince Hunter and Hassell replace Jerry Stackhouse and Dominic George in an original trade proposal. Stackhouse's presence in the deal was modified by Thursday to get Dallas back the player he sent to the Nets, although in a way the league frowned upon—and George used his veto power to block his involvement.

"He's a stud in a lifetime type of guy to play with and coach," Nets coach Lawrence Frank, referring to Kidd. "He's had an unbelievable impact on everyone in the organization and we wish him nothing but the best."

Trade rumors had followed Kidd since last season when the Nets nearly pulled off a deal to send him to the Los Angeles Lakers. Last month he audibly demanded to be traded, starting a new round of rumors that have hung over the team for the last three weeks.

New Jersey is 25-30 and tied the Philadelphia 76ers for sixth-best record in the Eastern Conference. The Nets have lost 14 of their last 20 games. AP

KIDD: Once-in-a-lifetime pick

O'NEAL: Ramp-fo-master

Shaq's 35-year-old legs ready to run with Suns

PHOENIX — SHAQUILLE O'NEAL SAYS he is ready to run with the Phoenix Suns. Really.

"I'm going to be looking to get out (the 7SO), transition) Randy Moss and Terrell Owens," he said on Tuesday after going through the final practice before making his debut with the Suns on Wednesday against his old NBA team, the Los Angeles Lakers.

The prospect of the 7-foot-1, 325-pound (2.15-metre, 146-kilogram) O'Neal, at age 37, fitting in with the high-octane Suns has been extended across much of the NBA.

The Lakers' Phil Jackson, O'Neal's former coach, said Shaq's role would be "taking the ball out of bounds and sending it to the other team to get back."

"He's a jokester, and that's funny, very funny," Shaq said sardonic smiling. "He has 'dry humor.'"

Suns coach Alvin Gentry says people will be surprised about how well a motivated O'Neal can move, and playmaker Steve Nash was raised with the trade that brought O'Neal from the Miami Heat for Shawn Marion and Marcus Banks.

"We're going to have to adjust slightly to his strengths," Nash said.

O'Neal says he has no desire to be a star with his new team. Those roles belong to Nash and Amare Stoudemire, he said.

"I'm more like a senior advisor so I don't like to come in here and try to take stress," O'Neal said. "Just like point guards have more where the young guys come to the old guys with boards who have them do social stuff to get to the other side. That's who I am, the old guy with a big board."

Long pause.

"You like that analogy?" he said, obviously pleased with himself.

Nash was a willing sidekick.

"I think this is his 19th season married to Shaq," he said.

O'Neal helped the Lakers win their last three championships in 2000, '01 and '02, and won the finals MVP each time. He won a fourth NBA title with Miami in 2006.

"We had more great times than bad times together," O'Neal said.

Still, Jackson's comments have not been brushed aside.

"I don't take anything personal," O'Neal said. "I just have a certain life in my head, so I'm definitely more be careful with what they say." AP

California training for RP's Dagmil

By Mary Anthony Reyes

HENRY DAGMIL, THE OLDEST athlete competing for the Philippines in track and field, has left for California, where he will train until June, according to the Philippine Amateur Track and Field Association (PATAFA).

The 28-year-old hurdler is back for his third Asian Games after long jump champion will train under renowned American jumping coach Dave Boda and Filipino trainer Jerry Calderon in hopes of landing an medal-caliber spot in the Beijing Olympics this August.

The SEA Games record holder is arranging his moves in practice and Patafa officials are optimistic he will surpass the 8.00-m requirement to meet Coach Calderon for the Games.

There are still no lineup of events in which Dagmil can take part in the United States, though, but he will train under the same team of coaches who harnessed the skills of team mates Ralph Teddy Regulino and hurdler Shauna Mulles.

Mulles is also trying to get a crack at the Olympics, while Regulino, holder of the 800 100m and 200m marks, was sidelined by injury in the middle of last year.

Mulles, who holds the 100m hurdles/SP record of 13.40 seconds which she posted in the Asian Grand Prix in India last year, needs to surpass the 13.12 new Olympic Criteria B to make it to Beijing.

"I will do my best to qualify for the Olympics," Dagmil said before departing Sunday.

An engineering student at the Filipino Institute of Technology, Dagmil posted 7.93-m during the 2007 Thailand SEA Games, finishing behind countryman of 7.82m which he set in the 2005 edition of the Games.

Boda, a coach at the Long Beach State University, will oversee his jumping skills, while Calderon will take care of his physical conditioning.

Korean booters dump all-Manila squad

REIGNING

KOREAN FOOTBALL ROUND Ulsan Hyundai underscored its superiority against an all-Manila selection with three quick second half goals Tuesday night at an exhibition match at the Rizal Memorial football club grounds in Pandacan.

The difference in class and quality was reflected in the 3-0 scoreline that prompted newly-appointed national team coach Norberto Fogelzer Jr. to call on 19 players to shape up or be left out of the team he is set to assemble for the Asian Challenge Cup in May.

The all-Manila booters, mentored by Air Force coach Edwin Cabahug, were gasping for breath as the Koreans launched seven after wave of attacks that was rewarded by tall striker Cha Dae-Hoo at the 54th minute.

"They just couldn't keep up with the pace of the Koreans and that shows a lack of conditioning," said Fogelzer, who also instructed the Filipinos' inability to complete a string of five passes at a time.

"We have a lot of work to do," he added.

Receiving a cross from the left, Cha took a quick turn then fired past Edward Sacapaño. The win was set up in the 53rd minute, when Sacapaño, with a great volley at the near post, just moments after the SF goalkeeper allowed another goal when he fumbled what could have been an easy save on an Ronald's rolling drive.

The women's team compensated for the lack of their male counterparts' feats in the night as veteran Edna Agravante struck twice to power the SF EndDelles to an exciting 4-3 win over the all-male Korean Union Classic.

Skipper Marielle Benitez was also in the scoresheet as her dipping free kick from the edge of the area found the back of the net.

The second squad of coach Hans Smit is preparing for the second round of the Asian Cup in Thailand, where it is grouped with South Korea, Malaysia and host Thailand.

NCAA football

Meanwhile, San Beda College won a seventh straight crown in NCAA men's football by thrashing College of St. Benilde, 4-0, in the championship round save the weekend at the Philippine's football field.

Arther Nicolas Denis Lemons scored two goals in the 6th and 41st minute for the Red Lions, who failed repeated attempts by the Blazers to score by setting their self-existing defense.

Cabuff P Espino, Inquirer Visayas

National jins evaluate future Olympic rivals

BEIJING (GUESSPICS.NEWS) — Jins Sebastian Gu and Mary Annemarie Rivera will get a chance to observe and evaluate future rivals when they join the Senior Division taekwondo team vying to the 2008 Olympics next event on Feb. 26 to 29 in Beijing, China.

According to Philippine Taekwondo Association president Robert S. Aventajado, the event is also known as "Good luck Beijing international invitational tournament."

Athletes from 48 countries which qualified to the Beijing Olympics will see action. Among those are Korea, Chinese Taipei, China, Japan and Iran.

Aside from Gu and Rivera, the other members of the Senior Division team are John Paul Ilustrisimo (-58kg), Alexander Bibonet (-80kg), Kathleen Zambo Abara (-49kg) and Kirstie Elaine Alora (-67kg), delegation head and POC vice president Bong Chua Heng, men's coach Robert Gruz, women's coach Hazel Sanchez and international referee Roland Carapon.

"This is an important part in the preparation of Gu and Rivera for their second Olympic participation," says Heng.

SPORTS

PUNCH! Pacquiao (right) and Freddie Roach in an intense sparring session

Pacquiao gunning for KO, says Roach

By Ray Luarca

KNOCKDOWNS WON'T DO THIS time. Manny Pacquiao intends to knock out Juan Manuel Marquez in their rematch on March 15 in Las Vegas.

PacMan-renowned trainer Freddie Roach revealed the plan to Brad Cooney of Boxingtalk Tuesday. "We are going for the knockout. We have all intentions of knocking him (Marquez) out," Roach said.

In their first encounter in May 2004, Pacquiao felled Marquez three times in the first round only to allow the Mexican to recover and forge a controversial draw. Now the Filipino ring icon is bent on finishing him off.

"If Manny gets Marquez down that time, he'll keep him down," said Roach, who's whipping Pacquiao into tiptop shape for Pacquiao-Marquez II at his Wild Card Gym in Hollywood.

According to Roach, he hasn't seen Pacquiao so focused and so excited since the first time he fought Marco Antonio Barrera in 2002.

"He's looking very good," said Roach. "We had nine rounds of sparring on Saturday, and we used three sparring partners. I have a strong guy to press Manny. I got a counter puncher, and I got a guy that will run, all to give Manny different looks. He knows the knockout victory, and we'll show you what they are on fight night."

Roach said he expects Marquez to again fight with a counter punching style though he doubts whether it will still be as effective.

"The last fight that I ever seen Marquez come to win against Pacquiao, and he'll need to fight like that again," added Roach, who sees no problem with Pacquiao's weight which was 130 lbs last week.

"We need to lose nine lbs with a stomach ray go, so no problem at all," said Roach. "He's looking good, he's running good, his discipline is good. Manny is very focused, so don't worry, we are not going to wait for the last minute to make weight, that's for sure."

Scrambling to make 130 lbs in his rematch against Marco Antonio Barrera last October, Pacquiao wasn't able to win by knockout and had to settle for a unanimous decision verdict.

This time, Roach assures: "We are going to fight a smart fight. We are going for the knockout."

Marquez feels like 25, thinks 48

By Salvin L. Lagunilay
Contributor

WORLD BOXING COUNCIL SUPER featherweight champion Juan Manuel Marquez sounds ready to go and expects a war when he trades leathers with Manny Pacquiao on March 15 at the Mandalay Bay Events & Casino.

In an interview with James Sloan of Boxingscene, Marquez revealed that during his 2004 encounter with Pacquiao, he did not get any southpaw sparmates, but this time, his team has employed three at Elit Peñarrieta Gym.

Marquez (53-5-2, with 17 KOs), Venezuelan featherweight Rafael Ramirez (19-2, 10 KOs) and Nicaraguan super bantamweight Osvaldo Ortiz Cano (10-4, 9 KOs) have been helping Marquez for what he terms as "the most important fight of my career."

Marquez, who started his training before Christmas, looks rounded, lean, ripped and ready, according to Sloan, and currently weighs 132 pounds.

"I'm 34 years old, but I feel 25, and as far as experience I'm as sound as a 48 year old," said Marquez. "The important thing for me is aggressive and defending and I'm in the best shape of my entire career, because for me, this is the most important fight of my career."

Told about Pacquiao's weigh which hovered around 139 lbs this weekend, Marquez said: "Manny knows he must come into the weight comfortably at 130 pounds, and he knows what he's got to do to reach it. If he's over, it's his problem. I've come well, I'm virtually on my target weight and I feel very strong.

"Manny also knows what he personally has to do to prepare, because this isn't going to be an easy fight for him. I think I have a great opportunity to win."

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BUSINESS
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Poor not benefiting from economic growth

Economists urge gov't to focus on farm sector

By Michelle V. Rivera

THE BENEFITS OF AN IMPROVING economy have yet to trickle down to the poor as many Filipinos remain unemployed, economists said during a socioeconomic forum yesterday at the Ateneo de Manila University campus in Makati City.

They said the reported drop in the country's unemployment rate, which the Arroyo administration claimed was proof of a robustly growing economy, was artificial as this was partly influenced by people leaving the labor force.

They noted that there was an increasing number of Filipinos not interested to work either because of the lack of high-quality jobs or because of their dependence on remittances sent by family members working abroad.

The National Statistics Office (NSO) earlier reported that the unemployment rate improved to 8.2 percent of the country's labor force in October 2007 from 7.3 percent in the same month the previous year.

But economist Cielito Habito said the country had a dwindling labor force, noting that the latest unemployment rate translated to 2.2 million jobless Filipinos based on the NSO's new definition of the term "labor force."

Habito, economic planning secretary during the term of President Fidel V. Ramos, said people not looking for jobs and those not immediately available for work during the time of the NSO survey were excluded from the official count of the country's labor force.

Using the old, and what he deemed was a more appropriate, definition of the term "labor force," there were 3.6 million unemployed Filipinos as of October.

"There are people who do not work simply because the jobs available have any of two quality items just wait for opportunities in work abroad," Habito said.

He noted that while the industry and services sectors generated more than 600,000 new jobs in October last year, the agriculture sector, where most of the poor Filipinos come from, lost 211,000 jobs.

To allow the benefits of high economic growth to trickle down to the masses, Habito said job creation should be centered on the agriculture sector.

Habito said the economy also suffered from high unemployment, noting that 50 percent of the unemployed were aged 15 to 24 years old.

Economist Leonardo Canoy said the country's surprising economic growth last year, which beat most forecasts, would not be sustainable if participation in the labor force remained weak.

"Decrease in the labor force participation has led to lower unemployment, but is not necessarily a sign of increased worker welfare," Canoy said in the same briefing.

He said more people should participate in the labor force and earn income to keep aggregate demand in the economy high.

The economy measured in terms of the gross domestic product grew 7.3 percent in 2007 from a year ago. This was the country's best performance in 11 years, according to the government's economic managers.

But Canoy admonished the administration against overdependence on the growth in higher government spending and personal consumption, as well as increase in foreign investments.

Stocks down on inflation fears

SHARE PRICES CLOSED 0.3 percent lower yesterday amid renewed fears of inflation after oil prices struck a fresh record high and topped $100 a barrel, dealers said.

They said investors were also worried by domestic politics amid growing anger at President Macapagal-Arroyo over allegations that her husband and a key ally were involved in corruption.

The composite index edged down 8.42 points to 3,781.09 after moving in a narrow range of 3,778.21 and 3,793.46.

Volume amounted to 1.7 billion shares valued at nearly P3 billion. There were 73 decliners and 66 advancers, while 44 stocks were steady.

The broader all-share index lost 6.42 points to 1,944.79.

"The low volumes speak a lot about investors being cautious. It reflects their wait-and-see stance as they closely monitor domestic political developments and the state of the US economy," said Jonathan Ravelas of Banco de Oro.

Metrobank was down 50 centavos at P44.50. Bank of the Philippine Islands fell 1 peso to P57. Philippine Long Distance Telephone Co. was steady at P2,868.

Globe Telecom advanced P50 to P1,800.

San Miguel "B" shares were steady at P57 while its "B" shares fell 2 pesos to P81.

AFP

Asian stocks tumble as oil hits $100/bbl

HONG KONG—ASIAN SHARES TUMBLED yesterday after a surge in the crude oil price to around $100 a barrel reignited worries about the global economic outlook.

Japan's stock market slumped 3.23 percent after oil closed above three figures for the first time ever overnight in New York and then slipped back only slightly in Asian trade yesterday.

Investors "may become cautious in the wake of a surge in oil prices," said Tokyo-based Mitsushige Akino, the chief fund manager at Ichiyoshi Management, after Japan had ended in the red.

Speculation of a looming Opec oil output cut left the crude price at 99.26 dollars a barrel in afternoon Asian trade. It had surged to a record close of $100.01 overnight on the New York Mercantile Exchange.

Concerns that high oil prices could stoke inflation and stall record interest rate cuts are in the ailing US economy helped send Australian stocks down more than 2 percent by the close.

"There's a great deal of uncertainty out there," said Sydney-based broker Solitaj, an equity analyst at Investsmart, adding investors feared more falls amid worries about the world economy.

Those fears are centered on a global credit crunch spreading from the US, which has been hit by a default crisis among subprime—or risky—US mortgages.

Reports that the central bank list US firm EBS Financial Holdings quickened investors and threw the spotlight back on the slowing global economy.

Elsewhere, Taiwan closed down over 1.5 percent and South Korea ended the day nearly 2 percent lower. Hong Kong was down some 2.5 percent by the afternoon while China, India and Singapore were trading around 1 percent lower.

"Lackluster performance of Wall Street overnight and weakness in regional markets weighed on investment," said Chan Fah-keong, a Hong Kong-based strategist at Phillip Asset Management.

Philippine and New Zealand shares also closed down while Malaysia was nearly a percent lower after its morning session. The losses came after the spike in the oil price caused Wall Street to surrender gains and end lower Tuesday.

Oil analysts said there was growing speculation that the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (Opec), which supplies about 40 percent of the world's oil, would cut output at its meeting in Vienna next month.

AFP

Bangko Sentral sees no need to extend SPV Law

By Doris C. Dumlao

THE BANGKO SENTRAL NG PILIPINAS sees no need for another extension of the Special Purpose Vehicle (SPV) Act, which is expected to reduce the banking system's bad assets by P78 billion by the time the law expires this May.

BSP Deputy Governor Nestor Espenilla Jr. said the extended SPV law had done its job of encouraging banks to get rid of bad assets that piled up after the Asian currency crisis of 1997.

The SPV Law waives the documentary stamp tax, capital gains tax and expanded value-added tax and likewise reduced the registration transfer fees by 50 percent initially collected in the sale or transfer of assets. The first SPV was passed in 2002 and expired in April 2005 but another law was passed to extend its effectivity until this 2008.

"The role of the SPV was really to break the inertia because for a long time nobody wanted to do it...but the SPV has broken the inertia, so now we believe the SPV can safely fall away," Espenilla told reporters Tuesday night at the sidelines of the Philippine Dealing and Exchange Corp.'s annual awards for dealers.

"We have no plans to recommend an extension (to Congress)," he said.

Espenilla estimated that the record SPV would retire P78 billion from the banking system's stock of bad assets, lower than the earlier target of P100 billion but noted that was still a "good number." The first SPV likewise cleaned up about P100 billion worth of bad assets.

BANKO SENTRAL, P. 2

Eton focuses on OFW market

Nido sets $70-M capex for '08

By Abigail L. Ho

AUSTRALIAN FIRM NIDO PETROLEUM Ltd. has earmarked $70 million for its Philippine operations this year, in preparation for the implementation of a full-blown drilling program in its three service contracts in offshore Northwest Palawan.

In an interview Tuesday evening, Nido chair David Whitby said 2008 would signal the "soft start" of the company's long-term drilling program in service contracts 54, 58 and 63.

For this year, he said Nido would be drilling one well within SC 54 – its "commitment well" for the contract area.

Over the next three years, he said Nido would likely drill two to three wells a year, in partnership with other oil and gas exploration companies.

"We're looking at taking in partners for our service contracts. There's been a lot of interest in our contract areas, and in the Philippines in general. We have absolute intention to keep our oil in the Philippines," he said.

"Right now, the Philippines is the country to be in Southeast Asia, in terms of oil and gas exploration. The industry's time has come. The Philippines is the place to play" he added.

Nido is expecting its first oil production between March 28 and April 18 from the Galoc oil field, also in offshore Northwest Palawan, in which it has a 32.28-percent stake.

Independent appraiser Gaffney, Cline and Associates had estimated the production area in the Galoc field to reach as high as 125,000 barrels a day, on average, for the first year of production.

Nido is allocating its share from the Galoc field for the development of other oil and gas prospects in areas covered by those service contracts.

First project involves 13.8-ha property in QC

By Dustin L. Lucas

THE PROPERTY ARM OF THE Lucio Tan group of companies has ventured into the middle-income segment of the real estate sector amid softening market conditions brought about by the US subprime crisis.

More importantly, the new unit of Eton Philippine Properties Inc. plans to focus its selling effort toward expatriate Filipinos working around Asia and the Middle East, veering away from the North American market where many real estate firms have focused on in recent months.

Our main targets are the OFW (overseas Filipino) workers, professionals who can afford to pay a little more than P5,000 a month in amortization," Eton president and chief operating officer Danilo Ignacio said during a briefing yesterday.

Bolton Communities Inc., the company's wholly owned subsidiary, was set up to carry out a niche in this segment, launching yesterday its first development in Quezon City.

The project is situated on a 13.8-hectare lot along Quirino Highway in Novaliches, and will consist of five phases. The first phase will have 1,400 residential units in 14 mid-rise buildings of 100 units each.

Each unit will have a floor area of 30 square meters and would sell for P1.1 million. Ignacio said the units would be bought with a down payment of as low as 30 percent payable over 12 months, with the 90-percent balance to be covered by bank financing.

Under this scheme, buyers would only have to shell out a monthly amortization of about P9,000.

"We believe that there is still a strong potential for this market segment," the Eton chief said, adding that the only argument as far to take a hit in the recent downturn is the non-funded by OFs-based Filipinos.

Their purchases have been funded by their surplus income, as if their mortgages in the US rise by $400 to $500, they can no longer afford to pay for property here," he said.

Unlike other condominium projects which are completed in two to five years, Ignacio said Eton's affordable housing projects are released toward rapid completion to allow buyers to move into their units right away.

LBC earmarks ₱150M for refleeting, expansion

By Rica T. Chikiamco

COURIER AND MONEY REMITTANCE SERvice provider LBC Express-Phils. is setting aside P150 million for a refleeting and expansion program in 2008.

LBC Express-Phils. vice president for government Christian Jocson said reporters that the program would be funded with internally generated cash.

The company will spend about P60 million for new delivery vans, motorcycles and computers to support network expansion. Another P90 million will be spent on renovation or relocation existing branches and upon new ones.

"We will be getting 56 new vans, 125 motorcycles, and 350 new PCs," he said.

The refleeting is expected to be completed by the second quarter. The renovation and opening of new branches will be spread throughout the year.

Renovation work will mostly be in provincial branches.

The company has 605 branches and this will be increased to 700 this year.

LBC was founded in the 1950s as a land-cargo and air cargo agent. The company later expanded to include air cargo forwarding service and was the first to introduce a 24-hour air cargo delivery service.

Bangko ...

From page B1

By the time the extended 50% expires in May, Espenilla said other market-based alternatives to unload assets would be available.

"In fact, they're available right now. They can do joint venture [development] and securitization," he said.

"There's a natural market, venues for banks to unload bad assets because it's [refinancing] gainful. Remember those are non-performing assets that you are lending, that you're getting back to and you're not earning from. It's really the natural recourse," Espenilla said.

Espenilla said banks had significantly improved their asset quality by selling bad assets, in line with the BSP's expectation that the banking system's nonperforming loan ratio could fall below 5 percent this year.

As of end-November, the NPL ratio of commercial banks had fallen to 4.89 percent, the lowest level recorded since 1998, moving closer to the pre-Asian crisis level of 4 percent.

Asian ...

From page B1

Opec was expected to cut to prevent oversupply since demand was set to fall as winter ends in the northern hemisphere, said Ifeoma Ikwuakor, a strategist at OFC Investment Securities in Hong Kong.

"I do not think oil reaching the $100 mark can be fully justified," he said.

Exxon Mobil Corp., formed by Standard Oil Co. founder John D. Rockefeller, the world's biggest oil company, and the possibility of more unrest in Nigeria, Africa's biggest crude producer, had also stirred supply concerns.

A Texas oil refinery explosion and still below cold weather in the US, the world's biggest energy consumer, had also underpinned prices, analysts said.

AFP

GRAND WAREHOUSE AUCTION
ON-SITE AUCTION
VALUE INVESTMENTS INC.

Fisheries bureau prepares blueprint for 'mariculture highways'

By Amy R. Batino

THE BUREAU OF FISHERIES AND Aquatic Resources is drafting a blueprint to establish two mariculture highways that will open the local aquaculture industry to international markets.

According to BFAR, the highways will serve as a one-stop-shop for international buyers of Philippine high value species as it will link mariculture parks all over the country.

BFAR Director Malcolm I. Sarmiento said however, that the low volume of high value species—such as lapu-lapu, sea bass and abalone that are being cultured in the country—has delayed the full implementation of the concept.

Currently, national production of high value fish is at 18,000 metric tons, of which 4,000 MT are consumed locally.

"This is too small a volume for us to start the highway since we have to assure international buyers of enough supply to make their trips worth it," Sarmiento explained. "One vessel alone must be assured of at least 2,000 to break even."

But if the concept were to push through, Sarmiento said, it would ensure "cheaper transport cost and better quality fish for the buyers, which eventually would enable the country to be an important player in the live food fish export market."

Sweet deal for farm exporters

BIR seeks to withhold taxes on gold sold by small miners

By Michelle F. Batino

TO MAXIMIZE TAX COLLECTION FROM the ballooning mining industry, the Bureau of Internal Revenue wants the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas to withhold the two percent excise tax on the sale of gold by small-scale miners.

Small-scale miners are required to sell all the gold they produced to the BSP according to Republic Act No. 7076, or the People's Small-Scale Mining Act of 1991. The BSP, on the other hand, is tasked to buy gold based on prevailing world market prices.

The BIR said asking the central bank to be the withholding agent for excise tax on gold produced by small-scale miners would simplify and shore up tax collection.

Currently, the BIR said, collecting taxes from the sector was difficult because not all small-scale miners were remitting excise taxes. Finishing development taxpayers is also not easy, the BIR added.

"The BSP... holds a preeminent position of having full information relative to the amount of sales generated by these small-scale miners," the BIR said in its draft executive regulation.

Under the proposed regulation, the BSP would be required to remit to the BIR the withheld excise taxes on a monthly basis.

The tax agency said it was proper to tighten the way excise tax is collected from small-scale miners, given the mining industry's growing income.

The National Economic and Development Authority earlier reported that the mining industry posted a 25 percent year-on-year growth in 2007, registering the highest growth in mining in 6 years.

The proposed regulation will be discussed by the BIR in a public hearing on March 3.

The hearing is expected to be attended by members of the small-scale mining industry as well as representatives from the BSP.

Traders, government team up to boost agri-fishery products

By Ronnel W. Domingo

THE PHILIPPINE EXPORTERS CONFEDERation announced it had signed a memorandum of agreement earlier this month with different government agencies and the Executive Development Council to boost efforts toward achieving a 10 percent rise in the exports of farm- and fish products in 2008.

According to Philexport, the PHCCI is signed with the SEC and the departments of trade and industry, agriculture, and foreign affairs, would raise the $2.6 billion export revenues in agri-fishery products posted in 2007, mainly by strengthening existing markets and exploring new ones.

In particular, the MOA covers fruits, vegetables, animals, marine, root crops, animal fiber, horticulture, plantation crops, wood products, herbal products and natural ingredients.

Under the agreement, the DTI has committed to assist exporters in the promotion and marketing of products, aside from developing new markets and recommending policies and export advocacy programs through the EDC and other bodies.

For its part, the DA has committed to undertake development programs that comply with internationally accepted technical standards on the production and propagation of agri-fishery products, and meet requirements of importing countries or trade blocs.

The DA would also expand the base of entrepreneurs in agri-fishery, upgrade the food supply chain and promote financing to develop and sustain their capabilities for both local and export markets.

In turn, the DFA committed to help in information dissemination abroad, as well as support the development of Filipino community overseas as a market for food farm exports.

Philexport said trade with the Chinese and Middle Eastern markets would be expanded. It would also sustain trends made in traditional markets like the United States and Japan.

Walking stall

CONTRIBUTED P. BENOIT III

THE PHOTO OF THE "WEARY" CABINET of the Lola gets the vote of the guys down here in my bananas for "best performance of the Cabinet in a photo op."

Can you imagine having in one photo all the members of the Cabinet, more than 30 of them—men, women and children once?

How inspiring to see them in one photo, hugging while they are walking! Their decisions may cause life or death to us down here.

I am not sure if the Cabinet does it all the time, but if it is any gauge of how well they are meeting our country I can really cry now.

Even the group that is marching on the downfall of the Lola called on the Cabinet members to resign, the entire Cabinet took that little walk.

As if it would be enough for us to forget all the neglect, the stealing, the state-sponsored murders that took place under this administration.

* * *

THERE. Just want that off my chest.

But then again, reports also said that Finance Secretary Margarito Teves would not resign. Tsk!

Anyway, on television and newspapers last Sunday, Teves was expected to be resigning soon because the Commission on Appointments, or CA, kept on stalling his appointment.

A Malacañang media statement admitted that Teves has, er, "grown weary" of the delays in his confirmation by the CA.

"Ochays," Teves, your defense? Is it more of a backhand ("I have been trying to get the confirmation for more than two years now. Its chu!

I heard that somebody in the Senate who looks like JPE vowed that Teves would never get the CA confirmation... not while that somebody was still around.

Pero what I gathered, it looks like the report on the resignation of Teves took its inspiration from a "leak" Teves some media handlers.

The timing of the leak could never be more perfect for Teves.

Anti-Glorietta groups were wooing Cabinet members to resign, right? The Lola in the Palace would do anything to prevent any resignation, right?

And Teves has been complaining that the senators blocking his confirmation were both "administration" senators, namely Sen. Juan Ponce Enrile and Sen. Richard Gordon.

Thus, the reports claimed that Teves felt he was a victim of the Lola's brand of double talk, since he got her word of support in his long drawn battle at the CA.

JPE's absence only took Teves' mind on the controversy over the tax case of the British ambassador to Malacañang—the RP.

Under Teves, the Department of Finance convinced the Bureau of Internal Revenue to force BAT with much lower tax rate for cigarettes.

For his part, Gordon blocked the appointment of Teves for the DOF's failure to reduce smuggling, particularly of the basic bouquet, which are, and still is, Gordon's baby.

* * *

MEDIA is not as if everything was all right between the Lola at the Palace and Teves.

Recently, the Lola reportedly walked out of an assessment meeting with Teves and BIR OIC Lilian Hefti.

In the meeting, Teves and Hefti were supposed to report on the revenue performance of the BIR.

They apparently reported to her that the BIR had a big shortfall for the year 2007—no breakdown by quarters or semesters.

And so the Lola, ehem as ever when it comes to window-dressing reports, asked for comparative figures—meaning, the BIR performance under Hefti as against that under former BIR head Jose Antonio Bishop whom the Lola had actually fired.

Neither Teves nor Hefti had the figures, the Lola walked out.

And so, it's time reshuffle here it is here.

When the Lola fired Bishop in June last year, the BIR collection was about 10 percent higher than the comparative period in 2006.

In comparison, for the whole of 2007, the BIR managed an increase in collection of about 6 percent compared to that in 2006.

And the Lola knows that the BIR normally collects taxes in the second half the year.

In other words, the Lola probably had an inkling that the BIR was even doing better under Bishop.

Why then did Teves work on the Lola to fire Bishop for failing to meet the DOF set target for BIR collections?

And the Lola also probably noticed how the DOF no longer talked in the news about the BIR missing its targets...although it did do under Hefti—and even more miserably so.

* * *

BY the way, little birdies told me that the state-owned Philippine Forest Corp. leased a total of 40,000 hectares to a politically influential family in a southern province.

I mean, that's a lot of land for a single family, don't you think?

And who is the head of Philippine Forest again?

* * *

IN a recent disclosure, the publicly listed Security Bank Corp. reported that its net income for 2007 amounted to P2.7 billion, or more than 40 percent higher than its income in 2006.

That means that the bank's ROE (return on equity) was about 22 percent last year. Wow! And I mean, really wow!

In 2006, the listed registered ROE of about 17 percent which, at that time, was already considered among the best, if not actually the best, in the banking sector.

Where did the bank derive that kind of income? Well, basically, from loans! It seems that the bank went out aggressively to look for good businesses to finance, as it focused on medium-sized enterprises in the past couple of years.

The Security Bank report to the PSE noted that its loans portfolio increased by more than half, from only P59 billion in 2006 to about P92 billion last year.

President and CEO Alberto Villarosa explained that the bank really aimed at increasing its loan portfolio precisely to raise its income.

To do that, the bank had to cultivate new clients. It went to medium-sized businesses because management thought it had a built-in advantage among the SMEs.

For one, the bank's major stockholders advocated management, the group of Fredrick Dee, have no other business other than Security Bank.

It's something you can hardly say about almost all the other banks out there.

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OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR

CIRCULAR NO. 601

Series of 2008

Subject : AMENDMENTS TO FOREIGN CURRENCY COVER REQUIREMENTS UNDER CIRCULAR NO. 1389, AS AMENDED, AND OTHER RELATED REGULATIONS UNDER THE MANUAL OF REGULATIONS FOR BANKS AND REVISED REPORT ON FOREIGN CURRENCY COVER

The Monetary Board in its Resolution Nos. 92 and 120 dated 24 and 30 January 2008, respectively, approved the following amendments to foreign currency cover requirements under Circular No. 1389, as amended, and other related regulations under the Manual of Regulations for Banks (MORB) and the revised report on foreign currency cover:

Section 1. Statement of Policy. It is the policy of the BSP to promote fairness, accuracy and comparability in financial reporting. It is in this view that the banking regulations and reportorial requirements are aligned to the greatest extent possible with the provisions of Philippine Financial Reporting Standards (PFRS)/Philippine Accounting Standards (PAS).

Section 2. Foreign Currency Cover Requirements. The following amends Subsection X301.4 of the MORB and Section 73 of Circular No. 1389 dated 13 April 1993, as amended:

"Depository banks under the foreign currency deposit unit and expanded foreign currency deposit systems shall maintain at all times a 100% cover for their foreign currency liabilities. For purposes of complying with this requirement, the amount of offshore banking units in the Philippines of the authorized banks and other monetary boards thereon shall be considered as a single unit. The foreign currency cover shall consist of the net carrying amount of the following:

a. For banks authorized to operate an FCDU -

(1) Foreign currency cash on hand;

(2) Foreign currency checks and other cash items;

(3) Due from BSP – Foreign Currency;

(4) Due from other banks (other FCDUs/EFCDUs, OBUs, and non-resident banks);

(5) Derivatives with Positive Fair Value Held for Trading and/or Hedging (Derivatives with Negative Fair Value Held for Trading and/or Hedging shall require corresponding asset/liquid asset cover);

(6) Investments in readily marketable foreign currency-denominated debt instruments booked under the following control accounts: (i) Held for Trading (HFT); (ii) Designated at Fair Value through Profit or Loss (DFVPL); (iii) Available for Sale (AFS); and (iv) Held to Maturity (HTM).

Foreign currency-denominated debt securities conform to repurchase agreement/securities lending and borrowing transactions shall be considered as eligible asset cover for the 100% asset cover requirement. The same treatment shall likewise apply to foreign currency-denominated debt securities used as additional collateral in repurchase agreements or as collateral by borrowing bank in securities lending and borrowing transactions.

(7) Foreign currency loans and receivables maturing within one (1) year authorized by the BSP, booked under the following:

(a.i) Loans to BSP;
(b) Interbank loans receivable;
(c) Loans and receivables – others:

Loans and receivables authorized by the BSP shall refer to those granted pursuant to Circular No. 1389 dated 13 April 1993, as amended, and shall include the following: (a) those with specific approval by the BSP under Section 33 of Circular No. 1389, as amended (Loans Requiring Prior BSP Approval); (b) those short-term loans to resident private and public sector borrowers which under existing regulations require no prior BSP approval but allowed to be serviced using foreign exchange purchased from the banking system (i.e., loans to commodity and service exporters, indirect exporters, producers/manufacturers, including oil companies and public utility concerns under Section 34-A of Circular No. 1389, as amended (Loans Not Requiring Prior BSP Approval); and (c) those loans to resident private sector borrowers to be serviced using foreign exchange purchased from outside of the banking system under Section 34-1.a of Circular No. 1389, as amended. Provided, That all applicable banking rules and regulations are complied with including single borrower's limit as provided in Section X303.

(8) Loans and receivables arising from repurchase agreements; certificates of assignment/participation with recourse; and securities lending and borrowing transactions, maturing within one (1) year;

(9) Foreign currency accrued interest income from financial assets;

(10) Accounts receivable arising from sale of financial assets under the trade date accounting pending actual settlement/delivery of the underlying securities (Accounts payable arising from the purchase of financial assets under the trade date accounting pending actual settlement/delivery of the underlying securities shall require corresponding asset/liquid asset cover);

(11) Loans to RBU (net of transactions outstanding for more than one (1) year). Provided, That the conditions under §4301.3(c) are complied with; and

(12) Such other assets as may be determined by the Monetary Board as eligible asset cover.

b. For banks authorized to operate an EFCDU – The foregoing accounts, regardless of maturity, and in the case of investments in foreign currency-denominated debt instruments (including debt instruments booked under Unquoted Debt Securities Classified as Loans and investments in structured products), regardless of maturity and marketability, shall all be considered as eligible asset cover. Loans to resident private and public sector borrowers which under Section 34-A of Circular No. 1389, as amended, require no prior BSP approval and allowed to be serviced using foreign exchange purchased from the banking system (i.e., loans to commodity and service exporters, indirect exporters, producers/manufacturers, including oil companies and public utility concerns) shall however have short-term maturity.

In addition, the following shall also be considered as eligible asset cover:

(1) Loans and Receivables granted by EFCDU pursuant to Section 24 of Circular No. 1389 dated 13 April 1993, as amended, i.e., those loans of non-residents from EFCDUs, to be serviced using foreign exchange purchased from outside the banking system, that qualify under Subsection 24-1.b of Circular No. 1389, as amended. Provided, That all applicable banking rules and regulations are complied with including single borrower's limit as provided in Section X303;

(2) Outstanding Export Bills Purchased in the EFCDU books, booked under the following control accounts:

(a) Interbank loans receivable – if without recourse
(b) Loans and receivables – others - if with recourse

For this purpose, net carrying amount shall refer to the gross amount of financial assets, plus or minus, as the case may be, the following: (i) unamortized premium/discount determined using the effective interest method; (ii) any accumulated market gains/(losses) in the case of AFS financial assets; and (iii) any allowance for credit losses determined based on existing regulations.

c. Further, at least 30% of the cover requirement for foreign currency liabilities in the FCDU/EFCDU shall be in the form of liquid assets as follows:

(1) Foreign currency cash on hand;

(2) Foreign currency checks and other cash items;

(3) Due from BSP – Foreign Currency with remaining maturity of one (1) year or less regardless of funding. Provided, That such deposit/placement is not encumbered or is not being utilized for any other purposes;

(4) Due from other banks (other FCDUs/EFCDUs, OBUs and non-resident banks);

(5) Investments in readily marketable foreign currency-denominated debt instruments booked under the following control accounts: (i) HFT; (ii) DFVPL; (iii) AFS; and (iv) HTM, except for the following: (a) those which are subject to repurchase agreement/securities lending and borrowing transactions and those used as additional collateral in repurchase agreements or as collateral by borrowing bank in securities lending and borrowing transactions; and (b) those investments in structured products;

(6) Loans and receivables authorized by the BSP booked under the following:

(a) Loans to BSP maturing within one (1) year;

(b) Interbank loans receivable maturing within one (1) year;

(c) Loans and receivables – others that is any of the following:

(i) Outstanding export bills purchased in the EFCDU books;

(ii) Short-term EFCDU loans to exporters in the form of export packing credits, whether rediscounted or not under BSP's Export Dollar Facility, up to the extent guaranteed by Trade and Investment Development Corporation of the Philippines (TIDCORP) or Small Business Guarantee and Finance Corporation (SBGFC). Provided, That these credits are not overdue;

(7) Loans and receivables arising from repurchase agreements; certificates of assignment/participation with recourse; and securities lending and borrowing transactions, maturing within one (1) year; and

(8) Accounts receivable arising from sale of financial assets under the trade date accounting pending actual settlement/delivery of the underlying securities pertaining to readily marketable foreign currency-denominated debt instruments.

The 100% asset cover and 30% to be held in the form of liquid assets prescribed above shall be maintained except as otherwise provided in second paragraph of Item 6 of Subsection 2.a.

The amended report on compliance with FCDU/EFCDU cover requirements which shall form part of the Financial Reporting Package issued under Circular No. 512 dated 3 February 2006, as amended, is attached as **Annex "A"**.

d. The Due from Other Banks – Non-Resident (Off-Shore Non-Residents) account representing cover for foreign currency liabilities of FCDU/EFCDU shall be kept separate and distinct from the Off-Shr – Non Resident account for the regular banking unit.

Section 3. Securities Lending. The following is added as Item 'k' to Section X331 of the MORB on eligibility of foreign currency-denominated securities lent in securities lending and borrowing transactions:

"k. The foreign currency-denominated debt securities lent or used as collateral by the borrowing bank in securities lending and borrowing transactions shall be considered as eligible asset cover for the 100% cover requirement. However, these shall not be eligible for the 30% liquid asset cover."

Section 4. Repurchase Agreements Involving Foreign Currency-Denominated Government Securities. The following amends Items 'd', 'e' and 'f' of Section X322 of the MORB on eligibility of foreign currency-denominated government securities sold under repurchase agreements as asset/liquid asset cover:

"d. The non-foreign exchange risk bearing under 'Bills Payable' and included in the computation of the total FCDU/EFCDU liabilities subject to the mandatory 100% asset cover and 30% liquid asset cover;

e. The foreign currency-denominated debt securities sold or used as additional collateral in repurchase agreement shall be considered as eligible asset cover for the 100% cover requirement. However, these shall not be eligible for the 30% liquid asset cover;

f. Banks shall, at all times, comply with the 100% FCDU/EFCDU asset cover and 30% liquid asset cover; and

g. x x x."

Section 5. Transfer of Unrealized Profits/Losses from FCDU/EFCDU to Regular Banking Unit (RBU) Books. The provisions of Circular Letter dated 7 November 2003 are hereby amended as follows (pro forma entries attached):

"The transfer of 'Unrealized Profits/(Losses) – FCDU/EFCDU' to the 'Retained Earnings – Free' (and to the case of Philippine branches of foreign banks, 'Net Due to/ from Head Office/Regional Head Office/Branches/Agencies Abroad') account in the RBU book shall refer to realized FCDU/EFCDU profits/(losses) only and shall exclude the following:

1. Unrealized Gains/(Losses) from Marking to Market of Financial Assets and Liabilities Held for Trading (HFT);

2. Unrealized Gains/(Losses) from Marking to Market of Financial Assets and Liabilities Designated at Fair Value through Profit or Loss (DFVPL);

3. Foreign Exchange Profits/(Loss);

4. Unrealized Gains/(Losses) from Remeasurement of Hedging Instruments; and

5. Unrealized Gains/(Losses) from Remeasurement of Hedged Items

(collectively referred to as 'Net Unrealized Gains/(Losses) from Operations' in this Section). Provided, That prior to the transfer of realized 'Unrealized Profits/(Losses) – FCDU/EFCDU' to the 'Retained Earnings – Free' in the RBU books, the FCDU/EFCDU shall fully provide for its classified accounts.

a. The transfer of realized FCDU/EFCDU profits to the RBU book shall be made initially by a debit to 'Unrealized Profits (Losses) – FCDU/EFCDU' and a credit to 'Retained Earnings – Free' FCDU/EFCDU at the end of the calendar year or fiscal year adopted by the bank, and subsequently by a corresponding transfer of eligible foreign currency assets from the FCDU/EFCDU to the RBU books within a period of one month from the end of the calendar year or fiscal year adopted by the bank. The foreign currency assets shall be in the form of:

1. Due from BSP – Foreign Currency;

2. Due from other banks (Other FCDUs/EFCDUs, OBUs and non-resident banks);

3. Investments in readily marketable foreign currency-denominated debt instruments, except for the following:

(a) those which are subject to repurchase agreement/securities lending and borrowing transactions and those used as additional collateral in repurchase agreements or as collateral of the borrowing bank in securities lending and borrowing transactions;

(b) those investments in structured products; and

(c) those Philippine debt papers which were restructured during the period of moratorium in the payment of external debt.

Provided, That these shall likewise be booked under the same category in the RBU book as they were before the transfer from FCDU/EFCDU.

The transfer of the above-mentioned eligible foreign currency assets representing realized FCDU/EFCDU profits to RBU book shall be made by a debit to 'Retained Earnings – Free – FCDU/EFCDU'.

b. The transfer of realized FCDU/EFCDU losses to the RBU book shall be made immediately and shall be accompanied by a corresponding transfer of the abovementioned eligible foreign currency assets from the RBU book to the FCDU (EFCDU) Provided, That investments in readily marketable foreign currency-denominated debt instruments shall likewise be booked under the same category in the FCDU/EFCDU as they were before the transfer from RBU book.

The transfer of the abovementioned eligible foreign currency assets representing realized FCDU/EFCDU losses during the interim period from the RBU book shall be made by a credit to 'Due to RBU – FCDU/EFCDU Retained Losses from Operations', which account shall not be subject to asset and liquid asset cover requirements, and which account shall be credited by the 'Unrealized Profits/Losses – FCDU/EFCDU' at the end of the calendar year or fiscal year adopted by the bank.

The amount of eligible foreign currency assets to be transferred from the RBU book to the FCDU/EFCDU shall be that which will bring the balance of 'Due to RBU – FCDU/EFCDU Retained Losses from Operations' equal to the cumulative net realized losses incurred from the beginning of the calendar year or fiscal year adopted by the bank.

Whenever the balance of 'Due to RBU – FCDU/EFCDU Retained Losses from Operations' exceeds the cumulative net realized losses incurred from the beginning of the calendar year or fiscal year adopted by the bank, the excess shall be settled by the FCDU/EFCDU to the RBU by a credit to the abovementioned eligible foreign currency assets at the end of the reference month.

c. The items comprising the 'Net Unrealized Gains/Losses from Operations' in the FCDU/EFCDU, on the other hand, shall be credited/debited to 'Unrealized Profits/Losses – FCDU/EFCDU' at the end of each month, which account shall be credited/debited to 'Retained Earnings – Free – FCDU/EFCDU' at the end of the calendar year or fiscal year adopted by the bank.

Whenever the book of the following:

1. 'Retained Earnings – Free – FCDU/EFCDU' representing cumulative unrealized gains/(losses) from operations from prior years;

2. Items comprising the 'Net Unrealized Gains/(Losses) from Operations' credited/debited to 'Unrealized Profits/(Losses)' as well as those not yet credited/debited to 'Unrealized Profits/(Losses)';

3. 'Net Unrealized Gains/(Losses) on AFS Financial Assets' recognized directly in equity and

4. 'Gains/(Losses) on Fair Value Adjustments of Hedging Instruments' recognized directly in equity,

results in a net debit balance, the bank shall transfer from the RBU book to the FCDU/EFCDU immediately the abovementioned eligible foreign currency assets by a credit to the 'Due to RBU – FCDU/EFCDU Unrealized Losses Recognized in Profit or Loss and in Equity', which account shall not be subject to asset and liquid asset cover requirement.

The amount of eligible foreign currency assets to be transferred from the RBU book to the FCDU/EFCDU shall be that which will bring the balance of 'Due to RBU – FCDU/EFCDU Unrealized Losses Recognized in Profit or Loss and in Equity' equal to the net debit balance of the immediately preceding items '1', '2', '3' and '4' above.

Whenever the 'Due to RBU – FCDU/EFCDU Unrealized Losses Recognized in Profit or Loss and in Equity' exceeds the net debit balance of the immediately preceding items '1', '2', '3' and '4' above, the excess shall be settled by the FCDU/EFCDU to the RBU book by a credit to the abovementioned eligible foreign currency assets at the end of the reference month.

Section 6. Accounting. The following paragraph is hereby added to the provisions of Section X501.10 of the MORB and Section 66 of Circular No. 1389, as amended, on accounting for FCDU/EFCDU transactions:

"For purposes of preparing the FCDU/EFCDU financial statements, the bank shall use the US dollar (USD) as its functional currency. However, for purposes of consolidating the FCDU/EFCDU financial statements with the RBU financial statements, these shall be translated into the presentation currency, i.e. Philippine Peso (Php)."

Section 7. Repealing Clause. This Circular supersedes/amends/modifies the provisions of existing circulars, memoranda and/or regulations that are inconsistent herewith.

This Circular shall take effect fifteen (15) calendar days after its publication either in the Official Gazette or in a newspaper of general circulation.

For the Monetary Board

(Sgd) **ARMANDO B. TETANGCO, JR.**
Governor

13 February 2008

THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 21, 2008 PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER

LIFESTYLE

IN THIS ISSUE

Restaurant review: chic pizza place CPK /G5

MONDAY ARTS & BOOKS • TUESDAY FITNESS • WEDNESDAY IBU • THURSDA

KITCHEN RESCUE
Peggie Aprieto

Getting to know Nigella

The super-famous cook talks about her cooking philosophy, favorite cuisine, the one gadget she has to always have

MET DOMESTIC GODDESS Nigella Lawson in this exclusive one-on-one interview via e-mail for Kitchen Rescue. I have taken the liberty of asking her some of your e-mailed questions so read on!

When did your love for food start?

I come from quite an old-fashioned family and I'm the oldest girl of quite a large family and so my mother had me at work from the age of 6. (Thought I'm not impractical, it would certainly be true to say that I'm not well-versed in the domestic arts. I'm bad at ironing, I'm not one of those people who enjoy I horror rig and cleaning. I mean, I'll do it if I need to, but I'm messy. I'm not dirty, but I'm messy.

But I certainly love cooking and maybe I come from a greedy family so, I suppose, it's the language we speak. And even my brother who doesn't really cook a lot, when he phones me, he always talks to me about what meals he's eaten. And I think perhaps some families just are more interested in that than others.

Of the many kinds of cuisine in the world, which is your favorite?

I think, obviously, I have a weakness for my own homegrown cuisine. I think that British food has our bad-good press around the world, but in terms of our sense of cooking and everything, I think it's fantastic. I lived in Italy for quite a long time when I was young, so I'm very, very keen on Italian food. And I suppose that's the food I know the best. Funnily enough, my mother cooked a lot of Italian, too, because she had learned it when she was young. So I suppose Italian food of all the cuisine have had the most influence.

But I like adding that, for me, Southeast Asian generally has flavors that I find luminous. They are, like Italian food, very well sauced to simple, direct and fast execution, which I think is helpful to the contemporary cook.

How did you transform yourself from writer to domestic goddess?

I haven't. I am a writer and not a domestic goddess.

Your cooking philosophy?

I don't philosophize to me passed a word for my approach. But I certainly feel that my philosophy, if such exists, is just follow your taste buds. I think too many people want to cook and dream of creating something either because they think it's impressive or they've seen someone else do it. And I just think, really, it's all about whether you like the taste of something.

For example, like coriander. I don't know, it's what the Americans call cilantro. It's one of those that I love and a lot of people hate—you really just have to go by your own taste buds and create your own repertoire. That's based on your genuine likes and dislikes. And I think that's what helps you find your voice, if you like, in the kitchen.

What would you do with an egg?

Nothing very interesting, probably. My idea of a really delicious meal is a soft-boiled egg, mashed in a bit of toast. However, there is a recipe in [for those in search of the shows—because my mother used to do it every Sunday night... which I loved.

You get a small dish, put a bit of butter in it, crack an egg, a tiny bit of cream, and I use sea white truffle oil, which (my mother) unsalted here does. (She was much more economical than me, and also she didn't have the availability of ingredients I have.) But I put this dish in a pan of water, the water comes up halfway on the little dish and I bake it in a low oven for about 15 minutes. And it's the sweetest, melting, poignant way of eating an egg.

If you had a bowl of greens, what would you dress it with? A simple dressing recipe, please.

I would dress it with some chili oil, a bit of soy sauce and some lime juice.

A piece of good steak? Briefly describe your grilling tips and tricks.

Well, I think I'm a great believer in marinades. So I think if you have a piece of steak to something like a bit of Worcestershire sauce, maybe a bit of oil, some garlic cloves, maybe a bit of mustard, the herbs that you like and either a splash of wine or a splash of vinegar or some lemon juice, and you have that in a freezer bag, if you have a steak in that for a day before you grill it, you're guaranteed that you're going to have a wonderful, flavorful, moist and not dried-out steak.

One kitchen gadget you cannot live without?

The one kitchen gadget that I cannot live without is something called a mezzaluna, which means half-moon in Italian, which is a curve-bladed knife with two handles. So in other words, you've got this semi-circle blade and two handles. It means you can chop everything and you know you can't cut yourself, because both your hands are around the handles.

Electric or gas range?

Gas range.

Next week, more of Nigella, her favorites plus a recipe. Can't get enough of her? Catch Nigella and her delicious recipes on "Nigella Express," which premieres Friday, March 7 at 8:30 p.m. on Discovery Travel & Living.

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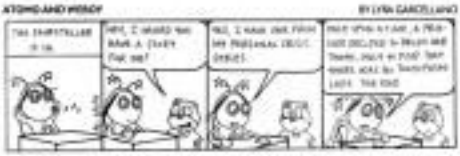

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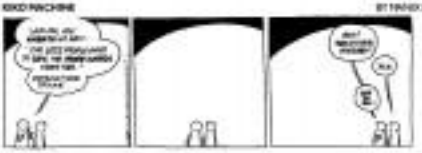

BEN

BY DANIEL SHELTON

DAILY CROSSWORD

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ACROSS

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4 Ornamental
8 Alcoholic's con
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14 Hobby Bay
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21 Money unit
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44 Dispatch
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48 Chronicle, to
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54 Kind of radio or
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55 Party pro
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indicator
3 April 15
withdrawals
4 Ambassador
5 Cooked like
pork
6 Chip maker
7 Rambunctious
8 Knicker fit
9 Bottom-feeding
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10 PC key
11 Nursery
12 Dance
13 Not it, in
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21 Cast off
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26 Pool hall emplo
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31 Cast off
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33 Hockey
34 Unsolicited
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35 Kind and
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36 Pharmacy
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38 Mechanical pencil
39 Elevator
maximum
40 Hoagie variety
41 Speaker's lot
42 Tiger
43 Some votes
44 Upstate NY
school
45 Fictional cyclo
46 Daily ingredient
47 Ms. Gabor
48 Tiny bite
49 Sonar
50 Morning grouch
51 Actor Romano
52 Lyric tone
53 Dances on
Clarke
54 Coffee flask
finish, sometim
Hers
55 Monsoon rainy

Wednesday's Puzzle Solved

HOROSCOPE

YOU BORN TODAY: You're a compliex person. You pick and choose your friends carefully because, basically, you're private. Insiders you consider to be your closest friends will tell you that you're a loyal, caring friend. Partnerships are important to you. You're very perceptive about others, and you seek a mutual appreciation with someone. You value honesty, and you're honest with yourself and others. Your lucky numbers are 6, 8, 11, 17, 20, 24, 31, 33, 36, 39, 42, 45, 48, 50, 53, 56, 59, 62, 65, 68, 71, 74, 77, 80, 83, 86, 89, 92, 95, 98.
Birthdays of: Charlotte Church, soprano; Mark Knopfler, rocker; playwright Jean Genet; actress Jessica Tandy.

CONCEPTIS SUDOKU

Conceptis Sudoku By Dave Green

	1							
			2		9	3		1
	6	2	4			9		
	3			8		7	4	
	9	8		2			5	
		1			6	5	9	
8		4	9		7			
							7	

Difficulty Level ★★★

Copyright Conceptis Puzzles, Box 1070, Bath, ME 04530

HOW TO PLAY SU DOKU

Fill the grid so that every column, every row and every 3x3 box contains the digits 1 to 9.
Tips and programs at www.sudoku.com

Answer to previous puzzle

2	5	1	8	9	7	4	3	6
6	3	9	2	1	4	7	5	8
4	8	7	6	5	3	9	2	1
7	6	3	5	4	8	2	1	9
9	4	2	7	3	1	8	6	5
5	1	8	9	2	6	3	7	4
1	2	5	4	7	9	6	8	3
8	7	4	3	6	5	1	9	2
3	9	6	1	8	2	5	4	7

THE CONSUMER

How long should you keep products?

By Linda B. Bolido

AS MYTILLION MEN LIFESTYLE correctly noted that trying to decode product expiration information could be complicated.

If you take a close look at anything packaged from your tea bag, you will probably notice that many no longer simply say expiration date.

Now you also see "use by" "sell by" or "best before." You also have to face up to the fact that entirely European packaging terms may before recently, while American items will have a month before day, the style Filipinos are more familiar with.

So March 1 will be listed in British (including members of the Commonwealth like Australia and New Zealand) and European packaging as 1 March.

The confusion arises when only numerals are used – March 5 becomes 05/03 for items coming from Europe and 03/05 when the orientation is reversed.

In this case, it is best to find out where the product is coming from so you can read the date accurately.

If reading expiration dates is a problem, you also have to keep in mind that some products are not required to give a "Best before" date.

Use your own judgment

But that does not mean who run keep the products forever. What it means is you have to use your own judgment to figure out how long to hold on to a product.

The MSN Lifestyle article offered guidelines to help you decide when to throw away stuff into the garbage bin.

It pointed out that people tended to keep spices, "twelve unlikely to get sick from old spices, but by keeping spices whole and grinding them yourself you're more likely to retain any health benefits (and flavor)," it said.

"Packaged cereals, which can have a long shelf life if kept tightly sealed, will probably taste better if eaten within the first six months. Canned foods can last a couple of years—but watch out for bulging ends or any signs of leaking. Most baking supplies—from oils and sugar to baking powder and cake mixes—should be tossed after 18 months," it added.

The article said, the refrigerator should be set to below 40 degrees to keep milk, yogurt and eggs safe for eating "even a few days past their sell-by dates."

Of course, anything that smelled bad should immediately be tossed into the trash can. "Foods rich in vitamins, like orange juice, lose their health benefits over time. Drink up within a week for the best taste and nutrients. Mark your own 'use by' dates on containers holding leftovers. That way you'll know to eat them within four to five days," the article said.

It stressed that all leftovers should be heated thoroughly to kill any bacteria that might have grown.

Medicines, the article said, would not go bad a day after expiration, but they could start to lose strength and efficacy. They should definitely be discarded within six months after the expiration date, according to experts.

Pills or capsules that are crushed, disintegrating or stuck together should be discarded. Toothbrushes should be changed every three months (or sooner if they start to show wear and tear. Loofah or bath sponge should be changed every two months.

The article said every year should mean one sunscreen, adding "the protective formulas break down over time, as do moisturizers that contain antioxidants."

While cosmetics have "a surprisingly long shelf life" it said extra care should be taken with anything applied near your eyes; Most lipsticks, concealer and powders could be used for at least a year, but the manufacturers should be consulted every three months.

The creams? Bacteria can collect on the manufacturer would and get into the eyes. Liquid eyeliner should be changed every three to six months.

All makeup brushes should be cleaned daily. Eyedrops and contact lens solution if the bottle and what is in the contact case should be changed regularly.

Send letters to The Consumer, Lifestyle Section, Philippine Daily Inquirer, 12th Floor, 815 A. Soriano Jr. Ave. cor. Muñoz, Quezon City, or e-mail them to: dvb@inquirer.com.ph

How-to classes on warm salads, rice toppings

CHEF HELEN ALPHAS WILL conduct the following classes:

Feb. 22—Hot Tree Warm Salads—all new! Chicken Curry and Mango Salad; Warm Roasted Fruits, Mixed Greens & Pepper Jowl Dressing; Cobo Salad; Thai Style Fish-eye Steak Salad; Crispy Chicken Salad; Caesar Cobo Salad; Bacon Cheesecake with Tomato & Mixed Greens Salad

Feb. 23—Pasta 101 Buffet 2. The Art of Making Real Pasta—all new!—5 Delicious Hand Made Pasta Variations. Fusyl—Mushroom Pasta 3 Ways in Olive Oil & Garlic, In Brown Sauce & Cream Sauce. Pasta in Tomato Rooms Sauce. Pasta with Mussels and Clams. Pasta with Three and Delicious Anchovy Pasta. Pasta Shells Gnocchi with 2 Sauces: Ragu & Salsa—Special Class

Feb. 25—Pinoy Pasta—all new!—Pasta Grilled Dec. In Sal—Queso Salsalata. Marinated Quezong Pan with Pan Jam, Queso, Jamon & Spiced Mango Jam; Queso de Bola, Quezong Pan Roasted Apples & Jamon; Quezong Pan Marinated in Pesto, Pears, Queso de Bola, Bacon & Caramelized Onions; Quezong Pan with Roasted Vegetables Mozzarella & Sundried Tomatoes. Soy-roasted Grilled Chicken with Belgian Caesar Dressing

Feb. 27—Around The World Rice Toppings—all new!—Japanese Beef Stroganoff Rice with Wagyu Beef Strip, Korean Beef Bibimbap Rice with Wagyu Beef Strip, Korean Beef Bibimbap Rice, Adobo of Lamb Spare Ribs, Moist Made Black Sesame Seed Ice Cream.

Call 9109294, 9273000 or 9920.8806833.

Tiny Kitchen
TINY KITCHEN
summer cooking classes for kids with
Vicky Veloso – Barrera

FAST-GROWING: Jhenzi-Jhabs Hot Loops Chocolate officially turned its musical trio a Starlited afternoon/kiddie party at Uncle John's on Aurora Boulevard in Cubao, Quezon City. Hot Loops, the snack sensation by 11-year-old Louise Mae quite-off-Pinky, was over three to 400 entries in the Mascot On Hot Loops Mascot promo. To mark the special occasion, Loopie Jhenzi, the newest Hot Loops Boomers mascot, was also launched.

Kitchen business series kicks off

SAN MIGUEL PURE FOODS Culinary Center kicks off an exciting culinary year with Business Opportunities Series (BOS) 1 to be held at the San Miguel Pure Foods Culinary Center, Barrio Pasig.

Set on Feb. 22 and 29, 1:30 p.m.–4:30 p.m. are sessions on "Filled Breads (plus Shakes and Smoothies)" as well as "All About Dim Sum."

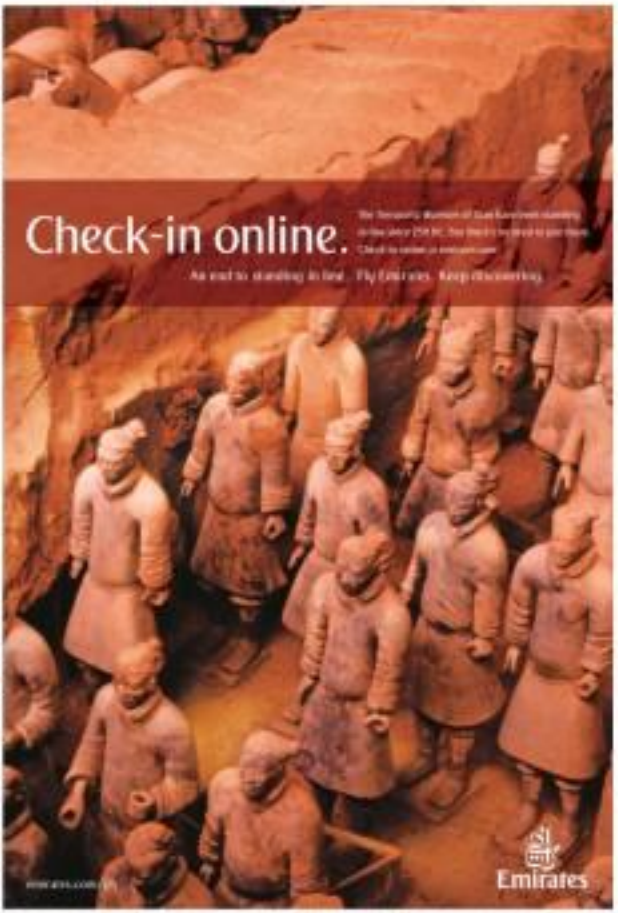
"Filled Breads..." will feature delicious recipes such as Ube Ensaymada, Jamaican Sisig Pie/Bo, Jamaican Ham and Cheese Pastie, Mini Sausage Buns, Hilwa and Ham Buns, Chicken and Pepperoni Pizza Buns, and Coffee Buns.

With a fee of P550, those who attend three consecutive BOS classes get the fourth class free.

"All About Dim Sum" will bring in guest chef Kenny Cheong of the Grand Earth Oriental Cuisine and Bar to unravel delicious mysteries behind well-loved dim sum favorites. With a class fee of P950, attendees will learn about Ox tripe in gordilleras and basic steps to preparing dim sum. A 20-percent discount awaits GFC ID holders.

Form sponsors include Monterey Magnolia Chicken Strips, Purefoods Hormel, Magnolia Cheezee, Magnolia Gold Butter, San Mig Coffee, Magnolia Nestcafé, San Miguel Stilla Premium, San Miguel Food Shop, San Mig Cafe and Purefoods Market Shop. Co-sponsors are Chef Rivaja, GS Appliances and Astro.

Call 6322000, 6405151 and 6710476 loc. 402. Visit www.mygreenfood.com



DINING OUT

The Pen goes Mediterranean

THE PENINSULA MANILA (MKTG) Executive chef Adam Mathes offers a taste of the Mediterranean, which can be divided into three culinarily regions: North African (especially Morocco), eastern Mediterranean (Egypt, Greece, Israel, Lebanon, Syria, and Turkey), and southern European (Italy, France, Spain). "Flavors of the Mediterranean," Lobby Weekend Buffet is available every Friday and Saturday (nights only, 6:30 - 10 p.m. The buffet is priced at P1,300+ (adults) and P780+ (kids 12 and below). Call 9012888, ext. 6757, 6758 or 6888.

SUPER BOWL OF CHINA offers Super Bowl's P98 Super Toppings. Its signature Lemon Chicken style, Asian Tokyoite chicken, mixed mushrooms and lotus pork cutlet; Chicken Leg Quarter Beef with Oyster Sauce with broccoli, mixed mushrooms, and vegetables; Kung Pao Chicken with mixed vegetables and mushrooms; and the Sweet and Sour Fish Fillet are at P98.

Meals are served with a glass of iced tea. To make your meal extra-special, just add P18 to upgrade your steamed rice to Garlic Fried Rice and P20 to go bottomless with your iced tea. Super Bowl of China's P98 Super Toppings is good for dine-in transactions only at the SM North Edsa, SM San Lazaro, and SM San Fernando Pampanga branches until March 31.

TEXAS ROADHOUSE GRILL, the first modern Western saloon in the country that gives diners a taste and a feel of the Old West, presents The Great Deal. Order the main entree, The Great Ribeye, and get a free Mighty Boy Meal pie. While you watch over 45-oz USDA Ribeye steak being cooked the way you like it—rare, medium rare, medium, medium well or well done—in the grillarea, you can plan your pick of the restaurant's side dishes—French Steamed Veggies, Corn on the Cob, Texas Rice or French Fries. Enjoy the Mighty Great Blackjack's rich coffee and chocolate ice cream layers with crummy bites of Snickers candy pieces atop a crushed Oreo cookie crust and drizzled with chocolate sauce. Texas Roadhouse Grill branches are at Bonifacio High Street (0908 5421) and El Pueblo, Ortigas (6090715).

UCC ESPRESSO introduces its Executive Meals which include Beef Curry with Rice, Chicken Teriyaki Roll Rice Plate, Hawaiian Kalua Meat Sauce Spaghetti, and Mixed Sandwich. These meals are currently available at UCC Café Terrace shops in Robinsons Galleria, Ferdinand Center in Makati City, 20/F/Mall of Asia in Pasay City, The Forum Center in Mandaluyong, and Metrogate Center in Makati. They are also available at UCC Café Kiosk at Glorietta 4 Park in Makati and UCC Coffee Shop at The Block SM City in Sucat in Muntinlupa City. UCC Coffee Executive Meals are priced at P199 inclusive of VAT and service charge.

KULA-KULA Seafood and Barbecue House (tel. 8132218, 7212261 and 7212269) offers Prawns and BBQ, Inihaw Belly Crispy, Javanese Fried Chicken Special, Hawaiian Crispy Crab, Fried Rice Mak, Calderon's Ginger and Garlic Crab, Grilled Hawaiian Dilgidon Steak, Battered Liempo, Big Mixed Barbecue with Shrimp and Squids Lumi, Charlie's Chicken Spring, Chicken Inasal, Crab and Taro Chowder, Crab Cappinno, Corned Pumpkin Soup.

HEYHEYCAFE serves the famous Batangas beef tenderloin as the feature Steak. Also available are Pinoy-style barbecues and other specialty dishes like Kare-Kare, salmon belly sinigang, adobo, Binak Tagaling (as well as pastas and desserts). HeyHeyCafe now offers catering services. It is open daily 11-3 a.m. HeyHeyCafe branches are located at Libis, Cloh 650, E. Rodriguez, Jr. Avenue, Libis, QC, tel. 6366091 and in Autocamp, Ortigas Avenue, Pasig City, tel. 6311558.

YELLOW CAB'S BARBECUE CHICKEN PIZZA

The country's premiere pizza brand known for its New York-style pizza introduces a delightful treat for those who love the juicy, flame-grilled flavor of chicken barbecue and the sweet-baked fruitiness of pizza. The Barbecue Chicken Pizza is topped with smoky barbeque chicken strips and layers of cheese. Visit Yellow Cab Pizza's Eastwood City branch at City Walk 1. Call 451 2222 or text (09 97) 4EWCITY.

Eat and get an iPod

WITH CHILI'S I LOVE Chili's promotions, dine in at Chili's and get a brand new Third-Generation 4GB Apple Ipod Nano. Chill out at Chili's every Friday until March 7 and get a chance to win the Ipod Nano on March 7.

There's no minimum purchase required. Just have lunch or dinner at Chili's every Friday drop your business card on the Ibis bowl provided at the host station and get a chance to win any of the following: Swatch watches, DSLR/SLR, The Spa De Luxe Massage Certificates, Pally Studded SLR and Eurosonic SLR.

Visit Chili's any time at the following branches: Greenhills 1, Ayala Center (tel. 8675727), Southmall Greenhills, San Juan (7259504), Santa Monica, Quezon City (3728817).

GOLDILOCKS offers Seafood Kare-Kare, Fish Relleno Packets, and Shrimp Patty

Coffee with extras

JAVA JUBILEE® WILL ADD brand to Dunkin's first coffee are in for exciting times in 2008.

The new SBC VIP Card, for one, has come a long way from what it was when it was launched four years ago.

From being just a discount card, it is now loaded with more treats, rewards and attractive features. Aside from a 10-per cent discount on food and free-range purchases, members will soon also get free drink juice logo during new drink launches.

Plus, there's a Point for Free Program with every P500 purchase. Each point earned has a peso equivalent that can be used to buy any SBC product. Members will likewise enjoy exclusive quarterly promos.

SBC will also be introducing new drinks every quarter, starting additions to SBC's freshly roasted premium blends and new merchandise that can be purchased at the deli.

What's new this month is the Dark Chocolate Orange Mocha, a mysterious concoction that combines the richness of dark chocolate with the tangy taste of orange in a mocha class only SBC can make.

No-calorie cola brand suits up in Armani

WHEN PEPSI CREATED ITS special, sophisticated Pepsi Deluxe drink, it collaborated closely with A/X Armani Exchange for the packaging.

This is the first time an iconic fashion brand has teamed up with a drink to give consumers a designer experience with the packaging design to its iconic cola flavor: to the key of soul of the sultry lips framed to the center of the can.

So for those who want more out of their cola without compromising taste, Pepsi Deluxe, the zero-calorie cola, is here.

Manila is the first city in the world to enjoy Pepsi Deluxe, which packs a full cola kick in two unique flavors created by Pepsi for those with demanding, sophisticated palettes: Classic Caramel and Strawberries & Cream.

Each package is in distinct hues and design with lavish swirls that embrace it's slim body and pouty lips. The design evokes a sense of the chic' culture and dedication to personal style, that holds its own among fashionistas and urban royalty, impressing everyone when it was first launched at the Resorts World non-starring Cebuhon gala.

A/X Armani Exchange draws inspiration from the freedom and energy found in the urban landscape. City music and dance provide the base soundtrack for what drives the Armani Exchange style.

Armani Exchange is the sensual, sophisticated, urban, and approachable side of the Armani empire. The brand was launched in 1991 by Giorgio to associate target active generation of consumers.

Try Pepsi Deluxe at all Shoemans branches and select supermarkets, or log on to www.mymistethange.com/pepsideluxe.

'Tis the season to go meatless

GOLDILOCKS FOODSERVICE offers a variety of seafood dishes for the holidays and budget-conscious Pinoy, just in time for Holy Week. Seafood Kare-Kare, Fish Relleno Packets and Shrimp Patty are available for a la carte or combo meal orders. Seafood Kare-Kare consists of squid rings, mussels and tentacles mixed with vegetables. It is topped with rich peanut-flavored sauce and served with bagoong. Fish Relleno Packets are stuffed with ground skinless meat and vegetables. They are fried until crispy and come with a combination of tangy mustard sauce and achuar of shredded or pickled vegetable sticks. The Shrimp Patty is a satisfying delight of cooked shrimps, breaded and deep-fried with sweet chili sauce and a side dish of sautéed corn kernels, bamigo, carrots, young corn and cucumber. Call 8881999.

WATERFRONT Manila Pavilion offers all-day breakfast items at the Patisserie. Try the Smoked Salmon on toast with onion, capers served with cream cheese topped with salmon caviar served with bread rolls, homemade jam and butter. There's also pancakes and Belgian waffles.

THE GOOD EARTH Tea Restaurant's new vegetarian dishes for customers who follow strict vegetarian diets. For appetizers, the menu includes Fried Broccoli and Asparagus with tartar or sweet sour sauce, Vegetarian rocks, and Eggplant with tartar or special tomato sauce. For the main course, there's the favorite vegetarian Chow Mein, Hofan, and Cubone. Other dishes are Hasty Tofu Mixed Veggies with young corn, black mushroom with bean curd casserole, broccoli with garlic sauce, and Fried Tofu with sweet and sour or Szechuan sauce. Call 7574981-82, 6073881, 8892268 and 9119429.

RESTAURANT REVIEW

Chic pizza, but spotty service on weekends

By Gina Marie

LIKE MANY PEOPLE, I too have a Blackberry for the (un-furry) of full-scale eating destinations for outings or comfort food. A few years ago, CPK was high on my list.

Established in Beverly Hills, California, in 1985, on the heels of the new "chic pizza" explosion, California Pizza Kitchen (CPK) jumped in and grabbed a big piece of that high-end pie with toppings like BBQ Chicken, B.L.T. Segment, Thai Chicken and Jamaican Jerk Chicken while keeping the Pepperoni, Mushroom and Sausage pizzas for the traditionalists.

Flashback to the '90s. I am a student living in West LA, when a CPK opens in the Beverly Center, a few blocks from my tiny apartment. My roommates and I make the short trek in four cars—a mob and, with our limited budget, we ate the Blue Corn Tortilla Chips with Spinach Artichoke Dip and then share a big salad, pizza or pasta.

Fast forward to the '00s. Back home, I used gainfully employed I am over the moon when CPK opens in Glorietta. Finally! Someplace to go for my "big salad" evenings. They have a busy lunch crowd and I am among the "regulars."

I have remained a regular even after they relinquished the ground floor to a coffee franchise. The last time I had lunch there almost a year ago, it wasn't quite as busy and the place looked like it was due for a little redecorating.

It was also hard to ignore the strong, musty odor wafting to the air-conditioned as soon as you entered. It was strong enough to kill my craving.

The latest CPK is located on the ground floor of Powell Place Mall's Archipelago wing. It's a great place to get a bite while taking a break from an afternoon of scouring out the heels on your pumps as well as the plastic in your wallet.

Just five minutes

Our first visit was for lunch on a Sunday. Every other restaurant was packed, with a 15-20 minute wait, so CPK was the unanimous decision.

We made a reservation for 1 p.m. and walked around the mall for 30 minutes to kill time. When we showed up at 1 p.m., the hostess informed us that our table was not ready and that it would take another five minutes.

The place was bustling with people inside, a long queue still waiting for a table and waiters running around from table to table with orders in one hand and pizza in the other.

Another 10 minutes flew by, as I made my way to the Spanish, Indian. I could even make a reservation, she apprehended me with an apologetic smile and told me that they were moving some customers and assured me that the table would be ready in five minutes. At this point, we were starving!

Finally at 1:20 p.m., we were led to a very cramped table against the wall and just a few inches away from the next table. It seemed to me they added tables (where there shouldn't be) to cater to our situation. I was not about to complain as we were famished beyond belief!

Our waitress arrived, looking quite harassed but cheerful enough. She took our drink orders and went off to get our orders. Our drinks came three to five minutes apart and we placed our food orders as served. After that, it took a while to get anyone's attention and our waitress was nowhere to be found.

I managed to "unleash" a waiter to follow up on the rest of our orders. Our waitress resurfaced, only to give us the "five minutes" spiel... again!

While waiting, our attention was temporarily diverted by a pesky, petite foreigner who was reading the Restaurant Manager of the day. She was livid to the point of injecting Filipino expletives in between other words (that was a certain relief).

From what I gathered, they had been waiting an hour for their son's pizza—and this was their first visit. The first impression looked like a deer caught in the headlights. No service received). I can only surmise that she was dumbfounded. With her family in tow, the customer made a beeline for the exit.

Meanwhile, back at the ranch, my sister's Chicken Bbq Lemon got to our table 20 minutes before, very dry with little to no addition to the description on the menu. It had none of the fresh arugula, shaved parmesan, tomato, basil.

When we called our waitress on this, she excused herself to go to the kitchen. She came back and informed us that "according to the chef" this was how it was served! Oh well!

Prompt service weekdays

Undeterred by our negative first Sunday experience, I was not ready to give up on an old favorite—so I went back for dinner on a weekday the following week.

The place was half occupied. The impression was a bit icy (maybe the first time. We were joyfully greeted by the hostess and led to a nice corner booth. Our waiter came over within a few minutes, cordially introduced himself and began to describe the specials with such enthusiasm!

The service was prompt, professional and unobtrusive. I did this again the following week and got the same, great service.

Conclusion: After the first visit, I was just a fluke. I returned with the kids on a Friday for an early dinner and movie. We arrived before 7 p.m. and the place was a ghost town. Within minutes of placing our orders, the woman cast quickly filled up. Of course! It was a Friday!

I observed that the hostess was packing the place as quickly as she could. This was when the service started to break down. Our waitress arrived before the drinks and appetizers and our pizza took too long we had to doggy-bag it.

I came to the conclusion that there was a lack of synergy between the front and back of house. There was nothing wrong with pushing the restaurant, but the hostess should've been told that seating people in five-to-seven-minute intervals would give the kitchen a little buffer to prepare orders without compromises.

This trickles down to the servers as well. The good news is that there are all-training issues and are easily remedied.

Old reliable

The menu is typical of American family-style restaurants. Big items, lots to choose from, among the specialties are the Chicken and Shrimp Lettuce Wrap, Chinese Chicken Salad and BBQ Chicken Pizza.

The Chicken and Shrimp Lettuce Wrap is CPK's take on the Chinese Lettuce Cup. The minced chicken and shrimp with shiitake mushrooms, water chestnuts and green onions on a bed of crispy rice noodles come on a hot plate, while a bowl of clear, cold, crisp iceberg lettuce is served on another chilled plate with a side of spicy chili ginger sauce.

I like it that I get to assemble it myself. The sauce is the perfect accompaniment—not too spicy but gives it just little kick. The different flavors, textures and temperatures make a very delightful treat.

The Chinese Chicken Salad is one of those things that I could eat every day. Moist, grilled chicken combined with shredded lettuce, crispy wontons, carrots, green onions, basil and toasted sesame seeds tossed in an equi-sweet and sour sesame dressing. I usually order it as a meal.

Just as wonderful are the Thai Crunch Salad and BBQ Chicken Chopped Salad.

Although I am not a big pizza fan, the BBQ Chicken Pizza is one of the best things on CPK's menu.

Of course, you can't skip the Spinach Artichoke Dip served with tortilla chips. It's a real winner, especially with the kids!

As they are my primary fan when you get it, a waiter informed us that all the desserts are flown in from the United States. I guess that explains the PF.Ch that they charge for a Hot Fudge Sundae.

I don't mind splurging as long as it's worth it. Grinning that the portions are generous, I will maintain that quality before quantity should be the basis for pricing.

The Key Lime Pie looks serious. The Valrhona Chocolate Cake doesn't live up to its name and the Apple Crisp is more common than apple.

You're better off saving your money and splurging at the dessert kiosk across the way or going one flight down if you fancy crepes.

The food is consistent especially if you stick to their specialties. You know what you're going to get each time. I will always name bank for my la. worries. Unfortunately, for most people, eating out isn't just about the food.

E-mail: gourmetgina@yahoo.com.ph

At CPK, the DIY lettuce wraps and Chinese Chicken Salad and BBQ Chicken pizza are among the best on the menu

Review card

Rating: Very Good

★★★

Restaurant:
CPK

Location:
3/F Archipelago Wing, Power Plant Mall, Rockwell Center, Makati. Tel: 893-3447, 893-0750

Service:
Best to go on weekdays. Otherwise be ready for spotty service.

Prices:
Appetizers: P 120-P 180
Salads: P285-P585
Pizza: P720-P980.00
Pasta: P215-P395
Desserts: P250-P330

Best Dishes:
Chicken and Shrimp Lettuce Wraps; Spinach Artichoke Dip with Tortilla Chips; BBQ Chicken Pizza; Chinese Chicken Salad; Thai Crunch Salad; most of the salads.

Best Table:
Corner booth to the left of the entrance

Details:
Open for lunch and dinner.

Ambiance as an eatery/bar/ entrance and ambiance as an event/party/	★★★★★
Excellent	★★★★
Very Good	★★★
Good	★★
Poor or Bar	★

Menu planning and cooking made easy

FRET NO MORE IF you're A working mom pressed for time and running short of ideas on what to serve at each mealtime. Nestlé Consumer Services has developed "Daily Delights, Menu Planning and Easy Cooking with Nestlé."

Offering more than a mere compendium of recipes, the handy table-top planner is a comprehensive collection of suggested menus and recipes.

It features weekly menu plans with recipes that are good for at least a month period. Nutritionists of nestlé believe each week consistently will cover the line-up of recipes for the period.

All the recipes have been developed and tested at Nestlé's Julius Maggi Kitchen in Rockwell by renowned in-house chefs Tess Bonilo and Ayie Mendoza.

Each menu for every day to four weeks is designed with variety and balance in mind, not mention good nutritious ingredients.

The planner also offers practical reminders that homemakers will find useful through the year when buying seafood, meat, vegetables, fruits and other ingredients.

Interspersed among the recipes are "Good to Know" and third and fourth Tuesdays, "Ground to Remember" tips that offer nutrition knowledge and make for better food choices and meals.

"Daily Delights" contains a total of 52 recipes that are simple and easy to prepare, light on the budget and good for the body. There is a dish, dessert or drink in out and entirely everyone.

According to Ayie Mijares, vice president for consumer services of Nestlé Philippines, the book's delicious recipe ideas are not special, since the evening meal is the time when family wants best gather and bond together.

Get your copy of "Daily Delights, Menu Planning and Easy Cooking with Nestlé" at select Makati food Mart and Power Books outlets, or at the Julius Maggi Kitchen free-cooking demonstrations, held every

1/3 c grated Parmesan cheese
1 tsp salt
1/8 tsp white pepper
1 c broccoli florets, blanched
½ c shredded celery leaves
½ c Nestlé All Purpose Cream
200 g penne rigate, cooked al dente

In a large pan, heat up olive oil. Brown the marinated chicken pieces quickly. Set aside.

In the same pan, sauté garlic until soft and fragrant. Stir in the tomato and celery stalk. Cook until soft and tomatoes are mushy.

Add in the flour and cook for 10 seconds without browning.

Pour in the water and Nestlé Fresh Low Fat Milk while stirring. Simmer for one minute.

Remove mixture with Maggi Magic Sarap, mushroom cheese, salt, and pepper. Simmer for another minute.

Add in the broccoli, shredded celery leaves, and Nestlé All Purpose Cream.

Stir in the cooked penne and mix well. Serve on a large platter.

Makes four to six servings

Good to remember:

The more vibrant the color of the vegetables, the richer the antioxidant content. Red or green bell peppers, corn kernels, cauliflower, green beans, and spinach will also make great additions to the tomato sauce in this pasta.

Good to know:

Milk, whether Full cream or low fat, contains the same amount of calcium, the mineral

CAFFÈ LECHO Walnut Layers, easy no-bake dessert

that helps build and maintain strong bones.

Cappucino Walnut Layers

Easy no-bake dessert with alternating layers of crisp and light biscuit, rich flavored and, for walnut syrup and heavenly sweet cream.

Coffee-Walnut Syrup:
1¼ c sugar
¾ c water
¼ c Nescafé Classic
2 tbsp coffee liqueur
2 tbsp cold butter
½ tsp flavoring (vanilla, rum, or cinnamon)
½ c chopped walnuts

In a heavy bottom saucepan, combine sugar, water, coffee and coffee liqueur. Cook over medium low heat together until mixture is boiling rapidly for 15 minutes. Remove from heat and add the walnuts, flavoring, and butter. Beat until the mixture is greatly thickened. Set aside.

Mix together:
2 tsbs Nestlé 200ml Nestlé All Purpose Cream
½ c condensed milk
(Supplement, as needed)
Extra chopped walnuts for garnish

Prepare single serving molds. To assemble the layers, place a biscuit in the bottom. Cover biscuit with 2-3 tbsp of cream mixture.

Top with a tablespoon of walnut coffee syrup. Layer another biscuit then with the cream mixture.

Garnish the top layer with more walnut-coffee syrup and walnuts. Chill until set, then serve.

Makes 10-12 servings.

Good to Remember:

Most antioxidants are take in from food and beverages rather than pills or supplements. So have a cup of your favorite brand and have you full of antioxidants for the day.

Good to Know:

Coffee, whether with caffeine or decaffeinated, contain the same amount of antioxidants.

PENNE Primavera, rich cream-based sauce made with white meat and vegetables.

Many kinds of food smell awful and yet, and yet

COUNTRY COOKING
Micky Roxs

Culinary scents and sensibility

MY FATHER INTRODUCED me to bleu cheese. I was in grade school and thought it was the most awful-tasting cheese I had ever had.

The blue-green veins looked mold and smelled like mold. But I tried to act sophisticated and so smiled and nodded and as I was enjoying my crackers dabbed with that white cheese with blue streaks.

Today, I love bleu cheese and the only thing stopping me from eating it forever is the fact that cheese usually ends up on the hips, also forever.

This remembrance came about as I talked with old friends, great cook and reliable food tasting judge, He asked if I knew about stinky tofu. He can get that in Taiwan and his wife, Lily Ann, wondered if I'd ever had it. I never wanted to; I could taste it. Stinky tofu. I was thinking maybe me bni Mol was cultivating, while he talked about it and he is looking forward to his trip there.

It's funny how we are always taught that smell and taste are so interrelated that we presume that if food has to smell good to taste good. But here do you account for the awful smell of stinky tofu and the fact that I know s/he love it long sentence?

Paste taste

That question must be asked by those who don't love the smell of nuoc mam (fish or shrimp paste). My dogsitting hosts need only to get a whiff of it being cooked and we're persona non grata.

I was given some excellent guinomou (shrimp paste) in Iloilo by one of the cooks there. My friend Noah Padilla cooked it. She reported that it smelled clean and was first rate. I could only surmise that meant the paste was done "by good guinomou makers who know their business, who take pride in what they do.

Fermented

The first time I had shrimp sisig (fermented mudfish) was when the writer Krip Yuson had it at his favorite (lunch pack) in a picnic along the shore of Laguna de Bay. He told me to smell it and I almost fainted. I remembered thinking why he'd want to eat that rotten food with the smelly red rice. The fermentation does that and the red color is from the annatto, a kind of lush that's added. But I took a deep breath and tried it and a tide like my first taste of bleu cheese, only worse.

The next time I had bare was at the late Digua Abadiano's Kadare bed, an restaurant in Angeles. I suppose upon request, that kind of bare takes on the palate maturity because I thoroughly loved the red fermented rice, with specks of the mudfish, salsen with tomatoes (mustard leaves).

There is white bare in Pampanga, and people who aren't used to the taste (smell) have a substance for it—take up pure (cat's pulse). But, like very good Ilocos guinamos, a good bare may smell rancid but the taste is divine.

The white bare is easier on the eye and other being mashed it has small red pieces of tomato embedded. Now, if I am in Pampanga or eating in a restaurant that serves Pampanga food, I can't imagine eating grilled or fried fish without the white bare taken with sinamak.

Cleaning and cooking fish is this episode, which is great for those of us who don't have time to go to Pampanga when we want to have bare.

Tiny crab version

Now the barong talangka (salted small crabs) I once studied Harem's sister. There has been no opportunity and I wasn't looking for that opportunity, really. It's always the idea of the smell that can catch me off-guard. Images of orgy-inducing bar, again, those who love it will not even talk of the smell but will wax poetic about how wonderful eating the salted tiny small crabs is.

Didn't Tim Bautista, who was a 8-teller in the Jeanne Gamboa Persuades Food Writing Award 2004, wrote how the "acid test of sexy-tanse" into her husband's family was eating barong talangka ("Courtship, Marriage and Boiling Talangka"). She is now addicted to it, looks for it when the talangka is in season. She avers how barong talangka is different from cooked sabe ng talangka (sic) because the "appreciations is absent... Because the cooking means she is familiar's boldness."

I think my hesitation is because when we were brought some, the barong talangka somehow escaped from its container and started walking around the kitchen.

Rotten egg

When I went to Pateros to find out why people liked abnoc, didn't egg odorous the drink inside has rotted on its way to becoming balut, I was told to expect a foul-smelling egg cooked to crusher. Instead, I hardly smelled anything rotten and even when I was eating it. I suspect it must have something to do with so-much money calamine added to the mix.

When we talk about smelly and stinky, can abstain be far behind?

Now my children aren't like me. If they smell something bad, they will say so, especially my second boy. When he was about 5, he came across a cigarette pulchino and declared that it smelled awful.

Fruit encounters

The most aromatic fruit encounter was when I ate durian at a secluded part of Bohol. Because I don't know he would complain loudly and quite the predictable bag he ran out of his tents and shouted, "What's that smell?"

Again, one achieves small victories my just like palate maturity and so, he doesn't complain when I have my durian fix.

It was on my first trip to Davao when I was initiated into tasting durian. The people there have this line that when you see durian you will return to Davao. That persuaded me and I did go back to Davao but it took 28 years after the first time.

The great thing is that since that first taste, I have loved durian. And every time I go to 168 Sandiguan's home in Hollandia, Manila Cavalcana, I get more addicted and don't feel any actually become a durian connoisseur, not somebody.

One unconscionable, therefore, that it just takes a first taste to make the nose and the palate accept the smelly and unbelievable. So bring on the stinky tofu and barong talangka.

E-mail the author at pinoyfood@yahoo.com

Going gung-ho for 'gyudon'

YOU HAVE UNTIL MARCH 15 TO join the Yoshinoya gyudon eating contest.

This year's contest is bigger and more exciting as it features two categories that will only push gyudon lovers to the limit: The 10-bowl Number of Gyudon Beef Bowls in 20 Minutes and The Fastest to Eat 2 Gyudon Beef Bowls.

The first category challenges participants to consume the most number of gyudon beef bowls in 20 minutes while the second category dares them to consume two bowls within the shortest time.

To join, customers are required to visit Booth 14 at any Yoshinoya outlet for a fee of P188 for the 10-bowl Number of Gyudon Beef Bowls in 20 minutes and P158 for the Fastest to Eat 2 Gyudon Beef Bowls.

Meal brownies per order will be raised to help campaign and will go to zero-tempo in the grand finals set March 15 at the SM Mall of Asia's Music Hall.

The champion for the "fastest gyudon eater" category will receive P50,000 while second place and third place winners will get P30,000 and P20,000, respectively.

AFTER last year's excellent turnout, all is set for a bigger and more exciting Yoshinoya Gyudon Eating Contest 2008.

For the "fastest gyudon eater" category the champion will take home P50,000; second place, P25,000; third place, P20,000. Thirdly, winners will receive P500 worth of Yoshinoya gift certificates.

The 2008 Yoshinoya Gyudon Eating Contest is sponsored by E-gamez, Tanduay Distillers, Inc., LG Refrigerators and Microwaves, Orix Sports, Mindanao Systems and Management, Undercote Autos Magazine, and SM Mall of Asia.

Yoshinoya serves gyudon at Uncle Jolly Snack Square 3, Robinsons Galleria, SM Megamall, SM Mall of Asia and SM City North Edsa.

HENRY SISON
CULINARY SCHOOL

ENTERTAINMENT

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INSIDE

- **Seems Regine did consider becoming Kapamilya** Rushes /D6
- **A conversation with the 'Daybreak' boys** Take Five /D5

UN ENVOY VS HUNGER

Children in the remote Manobo Cotabato region hug UN World Food Program's Philippine ambassador Cardinal Gaudencio Rosales as he visits them to launch a campaign against hunger. Cardinal Rosales vowed to make this latest relief an priority. "I'm duty-bound to support the UNWFP-backed program," he said. "I cannot turn a blind eye to hungry children." Full story on page D3.

Ramiele in 'Idol,' Mariel in 'Dance'

Pinoy sightings in US talent shows

By Bayani San Diego Jr.

THERE ARE TWO FILIPINAS IN current US television shows — actually most of the biggest talent searches.

In bayanihan entertainment reported a week before the official announcements on Feb. 14, 15, Idaho-American Jasmine Mahilay has made it to the Top 24 of the world famous reality-singing competition "American Idol," airing on Fox in the United States.

On rival ABC, 19-year-old Mariel Jacoda is a finalist in "Dancer Star Drama vs. Carrie Ann," a new lift hosted by "Dancing with the Stars" judges and choreographers Brooke Tomlinson and Carrie Ann Inaba.

Inquirer learned of Mahilay's inclusion as Al Bendis via blog/"spoiler" reports on the Internet.

The happy news about Jacoda was sent through e-mail by bayanihan reader and blogger Arnold Ford.

Idol's idols

On the official Idol web site, Mahilay named Filipino singers Lani Misalucha and Regine Velasquez as her musical influences, along with Mariah Carey, Aretha Franklin and the Jackson 5.

Mahilay, 20, a night waitress from Pittsburgh, Florida, said she started singing at 12, and also plays the piano and guitar "a little bit."

RAMIELE Mahilay

MARIEL Jacoda

Proud Pinay

A quick check on Jacoda's myspace blog confirmed her heritage.

In an entry dated Sept. 29, 2007, Jacoda wrote: "About me being Filipina . . . or Asian or set to families or whatever you'd like to call me . . . I'm really glad cuz ruby it's . . . so unique. I'm quite proud [of] my nationality . . ."

On the show's official web site, Jacoda said her ethnicity had made it "difficult" for her to break into the industry like Jasped that "Dance War" would bring her into people's homes "to do/see/hear/enjoy/etc possible."

Although the Chicago resident called herself "dynamo-boy," she has a sob story.

She said she was driven and motivated with success because her grandmother had given her the money to move to California to attend the Hollywood Pop Academy.

On the blog site, the singer-dancer named Whitney Houston, Eminem, Diana Ross, Beyonce, and Earth, Wind & Fire as her "musical idols."

(E-mail: bayanisandiego@yahoo.com)

KC visits North Cotabato schoolchildren as UN envoy

PIKIT, North Cotabato—"People are literally sellers their stomachs out full, and nutritious brings children to schools," actress KC Concepcion said during her visit to little-starved refugee here on Monday.

KC had the distribution of food to impoverished children in Datumpao Kumangan and Kalaboskos—where a feeding program is ongoing—on her first provincial trip since becoming the UN World Food Program's (WFP) national ambassador against hunger.

She was accompanied by WFP Country Director Valerie Guarnieri.

"I am very glad to learn that the feeding program's expansion school attendance as well as parents' involvement in school activities," KC said.

She vowed to bring the issue of poverty and hunger before her stepfather Senator Francis Pangilinan.

"I am supporting this feeding program," she said. "If other ambassadors are helping us Filipinos, I cannot turn a blind eye to the condition."

KC seemed unmindful of the heat as she mingled with the children, talking to them, even kissing some of them. Later, she read them a story.

KC Concepcion

Priority

In an interview with the Inquirer, the entertainer-cum-environmentalist said she would make more time for the feeding project.

"This is my priority. only KC said. "I feel fulfilled doing this for less privileged kids."

Undeterred, told the media: "The [unsight] KC from Sarangani we mean her to bring the wrists of Mindanao to Manila. And she came with us because she wanted to see the situation for herself," Robert Fernandez with a report from Jonathan Mariano, Inquirer Mindanao

"The U.S. President has been shot!"

All-star action-packed thriller solves assassination puzzle

The President of the United States is in Spain to deliver a major address on terrorism. His appearance in the platform in a crowded square. Gunshots ring out and the President falls to the ground. Moments later, bombs detonate.

In the hot new action-packed thriller, eight strangers with eight points of view try to unravel the one truth behind an assassination attempt on the U.S. President.

Separate lives collide as secret service agents, a news producer, a tourist and other locals in the crowd provide pieces to the puzzle to reveal the terrifying truth. All edge seat includes Dennis Quaid, Matthew Fox, Forest Whitaker, Sigourney Weaver and William Hurt.

Don't miss the explosive action

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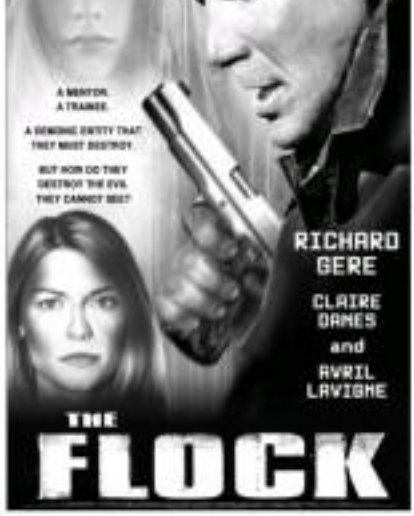

Seems...

from page D1

From readers

Reclaim a voice in the comm. E-mail rudyadriano@comph. Text to:

From Hobbit At Large (problematic-hobbit@yahoo.com):

There have been rumors that actor John Arcilla and gay announcer Mark Dongo [remember that "Sabado, pasado mo ako!" Like Papaya ad?] are an item.

While male celebs coming out of the closet is no longer surprising, I didn't expect John to—OK guy — as all I saw them together or during a special movie premiere at Cinema 4.

They appeared to be wary of prying eyes, as their heads were hooded caps. [Bars ito ha, Hindi, sa ako ito!]

From Jean Chanel (thecommunity-bar@live.com.ph):

Put together an album of a celebrity's favorite songs (they don't have to sing the songs, they could be some dead and couldn't sing to save their lives, but no matter ...).

Cook up a major intrigue or publicity stunt surrounding the celebrity— the more risque, the better. When the public pulse has been addressed enough, release the album.

Well, here a pleasure album to your hands and can laugh all the way to the bank. Gimmicks are now need to sell, not only albums, but anything else, including acting. It's a dead career that's trying to come back to life. [Eto na naman kayo!]

Politics on top hits list

Broadband Top hits from the Internet:

•"Five Hundred Million Thanks To You," by A. Bolso

•"Money, Money Money" by the Y Guys

•"The Universe of You," by Bernalot

•"Don't You Go, Don't You Go, to Senate," by Mike & Delicious

•"Singing Your Ka Man," by Sergio & the Apostles

•"If You Leave Me Now" (2008 to Cabinet)

•"No Ways to Leave You Love," (SMArcos PG

•"Sorry Please Don't" PG to EDSA

AT THE CINEMAS

GLORIETTA 1	JUMPER	VANTAGE POINT	SPIDERWICK CHRONICLES	MY BEST FRIEND'S GIRLFRIEND		
GLORIETTA 4	MY BEST FRIEND'S GIRLFRIEND	SPIDERWICK CHRONICLES	JUMPER	ASSASSINATION OF JESSE JAMES	UNTRACEABLE	VANTAGE POINT
GREENBELT 1	VANTAGE POINT	SPIDERWICK CHRONICLES				
GREENBELT 3	JUMPER	VANTAGE POINT				
ALABANG TOWN CENTER	ASSASSINATION OF JESSE JAMES	UNTRACEABLE	SPIDERWICK CHRONICLES	VANTAGE POINT	JUMPER	
AYALA CENTER CEBU	VANTAGE POINT	JU BRUSES	SPIDERWICK CHRONICLES	JUMPER		
MARKET! MARKET!	JUMPER	VANTAGE POINT	SPIDERWICK CHRONICLES	MY BEST FRIEND'S GIRLFRIEND	ASSASSINATION OF JESSE JAMES	
TRINOMA	MY BEST FRIEND'S GIRLFRIEND	VANTAGE POINT	THE ASSASSINATION OF JESSE JAMES	UNTRACEABLE	FU	SPIDERWICK CHRONICLES

AT THE MALLS

Ayala Malls

- Glorietta — 8th Installment Madness, Feb. 28 to Mar. 9, Glorietta Activity Center
- Greenbelt — Greenbelt 1 Cinema Theatre Proximity, GREENBELT MOVIEGOERS, February 20 & 21, 8am, Cinema 8 Park
- Alabang Town Center — LOVE TO SHOP PROMO, Get a chance to win a shopping spree or shopping for every P500 worth of purchase!, Pls. see leaflets for details, Feb. 14 to Apr. 20
- Ayala Center Cebu — HIS & HERS PROMO, February 15 to March 15
- Market! Market! — Beatles Beach Volleyball Mall Tour, February 23, Activity Center
- Christ Is — Repertory Philippines presents SCRAMBLED BY 11, February 29 to March 16, 2008
- Ayala Museum — 22nd Homecoming of the Asian International Art Exhibition, Ongoing until March 7, 2008
- Tri Noma — Totally Spies live at Trinoma, Feb. 23, 24, 29, 30 and March 1, 8am, 9am, 10am, Activity Center; Serenades at Trinoma featuring Richard Poon and Julianne, Feb. 29, 4pm, Activity Center; Serenades at Trinoma featuring Richard Poon and Julianne, Love-ovel Roses at Trinoma this February!, Feb. 29, 4pm, Activity Center

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1 JUMPER – THX	6 VANTAGE POINT
2 LIHIM ni ANTONIO	7 ASSASINATION OF JESSE JAMES
3 THE SPIDERWICK CHRONICLES	8 indistime: DAYBREAK
4 P2	9 BLONDE AMBITION
5 MY BEST FRIEND's GIRLFRIEND	10 UNTRACEABLE

exclusive at Robinsons Movieworld indiStreet Galleria
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ERMITA

1 MY BEST FRIEND'S GIRLFRIEND	6 THE SPIDERWICK CHRONICLES
2 THE MIST	7 JUMPER
3 BLONDE AMBITION	1 P2
4 JUNO / THE EYE	2 THE ASSASSINATION of JESSE JAMES
5 UNTRACEABLE	3 VANTAGE POINT

METRO EAST

1 JUMPER	6 THE EYE / THE MIST
2 VANTAGE POINT	8 P2
3 THE SPIDERWICK CHRONICLES	7 BLONDE AMBITION
4 UNTRACEABLE	9 MY BEST FRIEND'S GIRLFRIEND

NOVALICHES

1 MY BEST FRIEND's GIRLFRIEND	4 THE SPIDERWICK CHRONICLES
2 VANTAGE POINT	5 P2
3 JUMPER	

PIONEER

1 THE ASSASINATION OF JESSE JAMES	3 MY BEST FRIEND's GIRLFRIEND
2 VANTAGE POINT	4 UNTRACEABLE

TICKETS are now available at the ticket booth

STA. ROSA

1 MY BEST FRIEND'S GIRLFRIEND
2 JUMPER
3 VANTAGE POINT
4 THE SPIDERWICK CHRONICLES

LIPA

1 ALIENS vs. PREDATOR 2
2 MY BEST FRIEND's GIRLFRIEND
3 THE EYE
4 JUMPER

DASMARINAS

1 MY BEST FRIEND'S GIRLFRIEND
2 JUMPER
3 THE SPIDERWICK CHRONICLES
4 VANTAGE POINT

IMUS

1 MY BEST FRIEND's GIRLFRIEND
2 JUMPER
3 THE SPIDERWICK CHRONICLES
4 VANTAGE POINT
5 P2

ANGELES

1 MY BEST FRIEND's GIRLFRIEND
2 JUMPER
3 VANTAGE POINT
4 ONE MISSED CALL

TARLAC

1 MY BESTFRIEND's GIRLFRIEND
2 THE EYE
3 ONE MISSED CALL

STARMILLS

1 MY BEST FRIEND's GIRLFRIEND
2 JUMPER
3 VANTAGE POINT
4 ONE MISSED CALL
5 IN THE NAME of the KING
6 MY BROTHERS WIFE

BACOLOD

1 VANTAGE POINT
2 ONE MISSED CALL
3 THE EYE
4 MY BEST FRIEND's GIRLFRIEND
5 MARTIAN CHILD
6 JUMPER

ILOILO

1 VANTAGE POINT
2 THE MIST
3 THE EYE
4 MY BEST FRIEND's GIRLFRIEND
5 ONE MISSED CALL
6 JUMPER

'Daybreak' shows more than nudity

By Marinel R. Cruz

AWARD-WINNING FILMMAKER ADOLF Alix Jr. has asked the Movie and Television Review and Classification Board (MTRCB) to reconsider its ban on a publicity photo for his latest film, "Daybreak."

The snapshot shows "Daybreak" actors Paolo Ballesteros and Coco Martin in the nude. Alix said the photo by Jay Javier was intended for a week-long exhibit at Solidaridad in Robinsons Galleria, where the film opened yesterday.

Alix and his newest project allowed him to "explore the nature of a breakup in a cinematic/photic setting." The film, which has only the bare minimum, juxtaposes sexuality in one night and its next phase — lust, hangups.

"When Noel Ferrer (producer) and I were discussing the possibility of making a gay film, I told him that I wanted it to be about two people trapped and left with nothing to do but confront the issue. Ferrer's character, William, has been wanting to end his relationship with Martin's character, JR but doesn't know how. Hence the title becomes a rejoice."

Alix explained that outside Mr. Toad provides the perfect backdrop for the film. "It acts as a metaphor in the 'finish' of a scene that William wants to break, and the deterioration of their relationship."

Here are excerpts of Inquirer Entertainment's chat with Martin and Ballesteros:

Your roles have are your most daring so far. What was the most difficult thing the director asked you to do?

Coco Martin (CM): I got to kiss a guy for the first time. The most difficult part was the last kiss scene, which took us 16 hours to make.

Paolo Ballesteros (PB): I did a love scene with a man for the first time. Director Adolf said the scene had to be realistic and passionate.

How long did it take to make the whole film?

CM: We shot for only three days, but we worked around the clock. It was exhausting, but it allowed us to have some major bonding.

PB: We had a lot of discussion regarding the scenes, but I trusted my director. We did the love scene on the first day.

What made you say yes to the film?

CM: I liked the concept. I also believed in re-creating myself in the project.

PB: I read the script. It was challenging.

How do you compare to the character you portray here?

CM: I'm very different. I always say to (that) character: my being an actor frees my personal life.

PB: We're very different. He's a doctor and he's gay. I'm straight and I work as a call center.

Did you have any reservations about accepting a gay role?

CM: None. As an actor, I must (be) versatile and flexible. I don't see why I should limit myself.

PB: As far as I'm concerned, for a straight man to do gay roles effectively requires a high level of skill and entertainment.

What sets this movie apart from other gay films we've seen in the past?

CM: It's simple (but realistic. People are bound to treat it with respect.

Should you go into a gay relationship in real life?

CM: No.

PB: No, although I have gay friends.

Finally, you left show biz for a while. What were you busy with?

Family business. But I missed show biz so much and so I'm here.

Coco, you wanted your talent fee and opted to become co-producer. How involved were you in the making of this film?

I've always been involved in all the films I've made.

"Daybreak" is screening at Robinsons Galleria Ridgeline. It will move to Robinsons Ermita Feb. 27, then to Robinsons Istanbul March 5. Email marinel@inquirer.com.ph

COCO Martin, left, and Paolo Ballesteros

APO

UP PAMILA Chanda

Benefit concert for children top-bills Apo

THE APO PERFORMING IN A POST-Valentine benefit concert, "Tricia@20 Ang Pag-ibig," tomorrow, 8 p.m. at the Conservatory of Centennial 77, Mother Ignacia Ave., corner Scout Reyes, Quezon City.

The show aims to raise funds for the Salvation International Learning Experience, a one-school, non-profit and non-sectarian school that grants only tuition to deserving but financially disadvantaged children.

Call 911-0300, 374-4822, or 0917-8050995.

Manila Beach mall tour

The Manila Beach 2000 mall tour featuring Sandwich, Gabbidon, Wake Up Rise Remember, Parallo and Blue Rodeo on Saturday, Feb. 23 at the Market! Market! activity Center, Bonifacio Global City, Taguig.

Those interested to be in the mall Manila Beach '97 are encouraged to sign up at the "M on IN 'G1 search" booths.

Log on to manila.com.ph for details.

UP Manila Chorale's 'Pasasalamat'

The UP Manila Chorale sings for a cause in "Pasasalamat" on March 1 at the Saint Scholastica Academy-University of Santa Catholic School.

The group won two awards at the 2007 International Artists Brochure Choir Competition and Festival held recently in Austria.

"Pasasalamat" is for the benefit of the Philippine General Hospital (PGH) Ward 3 patients. For more details, log on to www.upm.edu.ph/chorale.

Tonight

Nano Cruz at Hideki, Level 2, Greenbelt 3, Makati. Call 754-0320 or 754-0321.

The Wolfbite, 8 p.m., Fiesta Circle, Eastwood City Libis, QC. Call 687-6770 to 74.

Tomorrow

Trio Bath, 8 p.m., Central Plaza, Eastwood City Call 687-6770 to 74.

Feb. 29

Pat Ilo at the Araneta Coliseum. Call 911-0303.

Mar. 1

Pat Ilo at the Araneta Coliseum. Call 911-0303.

Mar. 5

Maroon 5 at the Araneta Coliseum. Call 911-0303.

Philippine International Jazz Festival featuring Gerard Salonga (Philippine Independent Jazz Artist Group, Executive Head), Frank Wharton (Trio and FIFI Direct & Right Corps at Greenbelt 3, Makati. Log on to pjjazzfest.com.

Mar. 6

Philippine International Jazz Festival featuring Rhythm & Blues, Blue Smooth, Blue Jazz Studio, Bernhard Jacksons, Blue Stars, Rudolf Jazz at Greenbelt. Log on to pjjazzfest.com

Mar. 8

Philippine International Jazz Festival featuring Ella Mercado Amores at Cinema, Jeanne Tongson, Victor Antonio Band, Toni Fuentes, Joey Ayala, Gary Valenciano at Rockwell Club Power, Taguig. Log on to pjjazzfest.com.

Mar. 9

Incubus at the Araneta Coliseum. Call 911-0303.

Mar. 11

Colbie Caillat, 7:30 p.m., Glorietta Activity Center, Makati.

Mar. 12

Mandy Moore, 7:30 p.m., Central Plaza, Eastwood City Call 687-6770 to 74 for tickets.

Colbie Caillat, 6 p.m., Trinoma, Quezon City.

Mar. 15

Harry Connick Jr. and His Big Band, Smart Hall, PICC. Call 891-6666.

SHOW TIME

MANDY Moore

UP set to host controversial and Elwood Perez film fests

THE UNIVERSITY OF THE PHILIPPINES IN Diliman will host two film festivals — one featuring uncut versions of controversial films and five taboo movies by Elwood Perez.

The UP Film Institute holds a retrospective of movies by the award-winning director, billed as "Years Converge: The Stellar Art and Career of Elwood Perez," Feb. 25 to 27 at the Institute's Cine Adarna.

The retrospective is part of the institute's outreach program, designed to raise subcools and interventions across the country, and several international films capitals.

Scheduled for screening are:

"Nakawin Siete ang Bawat Sandali" (Inanggagalaw/P. PEREZ, 1978), with Vilma Santos, Christopher de Leon and Daisy Ortega. 6:00, 2:15, 2 p.m.

"Till We Have Again" (Regal Films, 1980), with Sen Santos, Tirso Cruz III, Dina Bonnevie, Eda Ekamanez, Armida Siguion-Reyna and Perla Bautista. Feb. 25, 5 p.m.

"I Can't Stop Loving You" (Regal Films, 2002), with Nora Aunor, Tirso Cruz III, Rowell Santiago, Jackie Lou Blanco, Lani Mercado, Miguel Rodriguez, Nadia Montenegro and Richard Gomez. Feb. 26, 7:00 p.m.

"Sabong Mo sa Dyos" (Regal Films, 1986), with Vilma Santos, Gary Valenciano, Miguel Rodriguez, Eric Quizon and Nida Blanca. Feb. 26, 2 p.m.

"Masaya, Hinahid Ang Umaga" (Imelda Gaita Pictures, 1977), with Vilma Santos, Christopher de Leon, Mat Ranillo III, Anita Linda and Amado Cortez. Feb. 26, 5 p.m.

"Silingan ang Hirain sa Langit" (Regal Films, 1980), Nora Aunor, Tirso Cruz III, Miguel Rodriguez, Gloria Romero, Perla Bautista and Ina Margarita. Feb. 26, 7:00 p.m.

"Isang Gabi, Isilang Bukas (Joan de la Cruz Productions, 1994), with Amalia Fuentes, Rosa Aunor-Rea, Pilar Pilapil, Lani Gonzalez, Ricky Belmonte, Dexter Ojeda, Mariano Delgado, Mona Lisa, Ray Marcos. Feb. 27, 2 p.m.

"Talaarawan Ni Aki" (BBF Pictures, 1981), with Vilma Santos, Christopher de Leon, Anthony Giardo, Eduardo Gan. Feb. 27, 5 p.m.

"Ang Tatang Kong si Pedro M" (MRR Films, 1991), with Nora Aunor, Lorna de Leon, Armida Siguion-Reyna. Feb. 27, 7:00 p.m.

A program in honor of Perez will be held ahead of the gala screening on Feb. 26 at 3 p.m.

The retrospective is presented by Regal Entertainment and Sampaguita Pictures in association with the National Commission for Culture and the Arts.

Call 928-3640.

'Director's Cut'

The UP College of Mass Communication (CMC) presents "Director's Cut: Mga Historyang Dapat Mong Malaman..." from March 5 to 7, also at Cine Adarna.

To be screened are the award versions of three nine controversial films:

"Bahid Ang Kahapon Pa" (directed by Joel Lamangan), March 5, 5 p.m.), about a woman, traumatized as a child by the massacre of her family in the 1970s, strikes plans revenge on the suspect, a military officer.

"Lamat" (March 1, dir. Ian Reyes, March 5, 7 p.m.) focuses on a young couple's problems caused mainly by a sick businesswoman who hate for the husband and a gigolo who is drawn to her wife.

"Ang Pilan ni Simone" (Jay Abacan, March 5, 9 p.m.) is a digital film about a gay teenager's coming-of-age and sexual exploration, which results in exploitation.

"Dada" (Ces Oreña, March 6, 5 p.m.) is a tale of infidelity and deception in a relationship between two men.

"Sonata" (Connie Macatuno, March 6, 7 p.m.) is about the romantic journey of two women in a forbidden and unconventional love affair.

"Twilight Dancers" (Bibi Chiangbe, March 6, 9 p.m.) is a social commentary packaged as a story movie about a macho dancer pressured to "dance" to the tune of a new global economy.

"La Vida Rosa" (Chito Roño, March 7, 5 p.m.) is about a couple's dangerous life as sex artists, which becomes more complicated as one of them insists on retiring.

"Ishaq" (Jeffrey Jetonio, March 7, 7 p.m.) is an entertaining but occasionally distracting movie about a brother and her daughter who are both abused rapist—first by a rapist who is one member of their family, and then by incompetent filmmakers.

"Live Show" (Jose Javier Reyes, March 7, 9 p.m.) is the story of poor Filipinos forced to perform sexual acts in front of paying customers.

An open forum follows the screening.

Call (632) 928-4804 or (632) 928-4807.

On facing human monstrosity

By Oliver M. Palambart
Contributor

AFTER the recently shown "Cloverfield," another good horror movie now comes in "The Mist."

Based on the Stephen King novella, the film by director screenwriter Frank Darabont ("The Green Mile," "Shawshank Redemption") offers engrossing, disturbing examinations of human nature when baffled creatures emerge.

Disquieting

Like "Cloverfield," it makes creative use of that penetrating uneasiness that make one question the arbitrary and random nature of calamities.

However, "The Mist" doesn't make use of (and familiar) creature gimmicks; in fact, the photography and editing are a little off at first, but soon get better. The initially restrained use of monster imagery and the careful pacing help in the build-up, too. But disquieting are the tension and unease that develop when you get an eclectic mix of people trapped in a supermarket during an unexpected attack by terrible creatures.

The creatures that arrive with a mysterious white mist after a destructive storm come in contact with humans and the results aren't pretty. The supermarket becomes a refuge for a few dozen customers suddenly faced with new options. Some of them prepare to arm (David Drayton (Thomas Jane), whose primary concern is his son.

There's the religious zealot Mrs. Carmody (unintentionally played by Marcia Gay Harden), who says she's attack has been foretold in the book of Revelations. Her wild, self-righteous pronouncements win followers, because the inexplicable onslaught has left them feeling powerless. The transformations of some of her new disciples into unthinking monstrosities is pretty plotting and scary.

On these two fronts, "The Mist" in its scenes serves to reflect and save for the clear thinking characters.

Meaningful

"The Mist" also ponders the consequences of incredible adversities, some characters react to them heroically, but tragically. In fact, on multiple characters and scenarios doesn't ensure; it's good to see how much of the movie impact figures, as in the TV series, "Lost." The insane mixing the theological debates and inherent fric- tion make "The Mist" an exceptionally meaningful horror film, a unique and welcome contribution in a genre popu- lated by formulaic flight fare.

THOMAS Jane, left, Nathan Gamble and Laurie Holden in "The Mist"

Seems Songbird considered leaving Kapuso

By the Inquirer and Philippine Star Entertainment Staff

Did Regine Velasquez plan to leave GMA 7? Well, it seemed one. But how and why?

According to a GMA 7 insider, Regine Velasquez was being considered in some circles network's MTB CEO, with the head role in the head position of the Lotlot soap "Berry Le Hoi" as bait.

Regine's talent manager Cassi Villanueva told Showbiz that Regine, up till late Monday, was considering it. The contract search went on, Regine had yet to decide.

Then, was that the reason she acted while singing with Jaya in last Sunday's "SOP"?

Prior to that, the closing episode was true that she had been upset that she didn't land the "Maya MVP" hosting gig, which went to Rustom Padilla.

During the rumor was true, for the past two months, Regine had been guesting in Kapuso's shows like "Bisaya" and "The Buzz." The result, she is appearing in "Maalala Mo Kaya."

Monday morning, she kissed and made up with her Kapuso bosses.

Hmm ah.

Let her 'it'

Actress and Star Cinema Gen. Manager Malou Santos has it all figured out. The only solution is graft and corruption is, "We all have to change!"

More from Gov Vicesantos.

Isabel in Bollywood

Singer-actress Isabel Granada were once small in Indian awareness ing that she is currently shooting a Bollywood film, "Phoren Mood," in Ghana.

The adventure film top bills Isabel Rabosa and Manoosha Al Bahadir of Oman. "It's time to find [illegible] scouring," Isabel insists.

Valentine getaway

While filming Lenier Mon Gutierrez's "Pinating" in Cuyo, Palawan, Judy Ann Santos was accompanied by boyfriend Ryan Agoncillo, who made behind-the-scenes glimpses throughout the shoot.

The couple spent some time in an exclusive and expensive resort on the island.

Good news for Gina

Good news comes in pairs for Julia's "Pinating" co-star Gina Pareño: 1) Her shower just sold her first hot teaspoon for concert had some loads organizer; 2) She is topping another "pang-matinee-idol" film, "Bestie," with acclaimed director Joel Lamangan.

Like father ...

NEW YORK—The 4-year-old son of "Cinderella Danson" Steve Irwin was set at alarmed when he was severely bitten by a baby bear cub, according to his mother.

"It bit Robert on the finger, and he was proud to have copped his first bit," Irwin's widow, Terri, said Monday at an appearance with her two children to promote a line of toys.

Terri said her daughter Bindi, 9, was first bitten by a snake when she was 18 months old. AP

Like Marilyn...

NEW YORK—Lindsay Lohan is following in the footsteps of the most famous blond bombshell of them all, Marilyn Monroe.

In the issue of Teen Vogue magazine on sale Monday, the 21-year-old star of "Mean Girls" and

"Freaky Friday" poses nude for photographer Bert Stern in a recreation of one of Monroe's most famous photo shoots, done shortly before she died. AP

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Top of the Talk Shows, Feb. 14-and 17

But those who missed the week ends TV gabfests. (And why we are unsure), if we are excused.)

•Thanks Gawis, on the spot between her brother Patrick and his girlfriend Jennylyn Mercado:

"Let them solve their own problem. Let them find their way, the best way they can. Be their pacifier," Dr. Tugading, medical no. six level.)

•Patrick, on his rift with Jenny Jr.:

"Yung problema di namin nagpo-po kaming dalawa lang. Wala nang iba pang sangkot na tao." (Patrick: Mature realistic." Tody

ISABEL Granada

•Vicky Belo, on her split with Jenny Jr.:

"Ang problema di namin nagpo-po kaming dalawa lang. Wala nang iba pang sangkot na tao." (Patrick: Mature realistic." Tody